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# **NAVAL POSTGRADUATE SCHOOL**

**MONTEREY, CALIFORNIA**

## **THESIS**

**LEADERSHIP TRANSITION IN KAZAKHSTAN AND  
UZBEKISTAN: IMPLICATIONS FOR POLICY AND  
STABILITY IN CENTRAL ASIA**

by

Shane A. Smith

September 2007

Thesis Advisor:

Thomas H. Johnson

Second Reader:

James A. Russell

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**LEADERSHIP TRANSITION IN KAZAKHSTAN AND UZBEKISTAN:  
IMPLICATIONS FOR POLICY AND STABILITY IN CENTRAL ASIA**

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Submitted in partial fulfillment of the  
requirements for the degree of

**MASTER OF ARTS IN SECURITY STUDIES  
(STABILIZATION AND RECONSTRUCTION)**

from the

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## **ABSTRACT**

After September 11, 2001, Central Asia leapt into the vernacular of international politics. This forgotten region, where the “Great Game” was played, received new emphasis in the Global War on Terrorism. Analysts found a region brimming with both promise and concern. This thesis focuses on the future succession of two regional presidents, Nursultan Nazarbayev (Kazakhstan) and Islam Karimov (Uzbekistan), who are the only post-Soviet leaders their countries have known. These are also the only two Central Asian states not to experience a leadership transition since independence. These impending successions are potentially watershed events for Central Asia. Succession outcomes in these states will not only have ramifications throughout the region given its interconnectedness, but also have foreign policy and economic implications for the global powers. This thesis studies the neopatrimonial nature of the regimes, the clan politics permeating the societies, and trajectories literature to examine the succession issue in these states. Conclusions reveal the conservative status quo tendencies presently embedded in these areas. This indicates that regime stability in the same vein as Turkmenistan at Saparmurat Niyazov’s death is a more likely outcome for the states in question than are events such as the Tajik Civil War or Kyrgyz Tulip Revolution.



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## I. INTRODUCTION

*Central Asia remains plagued by political stagnation and repression, rampant corruption, widespread poverty and widening socio-economic inequalities, and other problems that nurture nascent radical sentiment and terrorism. In the worst, but not implausible case, central authority in one or more of these states could evaporate as rival clans or regions vie for power—opening the door to an expansion of terrorist and criminal activity on the model of failed states like Somalia and, when it was under Taliban rule, Afghanistan.<sup>1</sup>*

**John D. Negroponte**  
**Director of National Intelligence**

### A. PURPOSE

On September 11, 2001, Central Asia once again leapt into the vernacular of international politics. This forgotten region of “stans,” where the “Great Game” was played by the British and Russian empires in the nineteenth century and around which Sir Halford MacKinder built his Heartland Theory in the twentieth, received new emphasis as the United States began to prosecute its Global War on Terrorism. What these newly focused analysts found was a region brimming with both promise and concern. On the positive side of the ledger the region possessed immense natural resources. According to the CIA’s *The World Factbook 2006*, Kazakhstan ranks thirteenth in the world in proven oil reserves, while it, along with Uzbekistan, ranks in the top twenty-five globally in proven natural gas reserves. Additionally, Uzbekistan is historically among the top five cotton producing nations in the world.<sup>2</sup> Unfortunately, the possibility for a better economic future that these resources promise is accompanied by major causes for apprehension for at least three reasons. First, the region’s leadership shares U.S. concerns about radical Islamic movements in the region, especially, in the wake of the civil war in Tajikistan (1992-1997) between the Tajik President Rakhmon Nabiyev’s

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<sup>1</sup> John D. Negroponte, “Annual Threat Assessment of the Director of National Intelligence,” testimony, Senate Select Committee on Intelligence, Washington, D.C., February 2, 2006, 16.

<sup>2</sup> Central Intelligence Agency, *The World Factbook 2006*, <https://www.cia.gov/cia/publications/factbook/index.html> (accessed October 6, 2006).

government forces and an opposition coalition consisting of reformist, Islamist, and clan elements. Furthermore, all the Central Asian nations, except Kazakhstan, consistently rank high in the Fund for Peace's Failed States Index.<sup>3</sup> Finally, the authoritarian records of the national leaders offer a poor prognosis for democracy in the region.



**Figure 1. Map of Central Asia and the Caucasus.<sup>4</sup>**

This thesis will focus on the future succession scenarios of two regional presidents, Nursultan Nazarbayev (Kazakhstan) and Islam Karimov (Uzbekistan), and what it may mean for overall regional stability. These two aging presidents were in power at the time of the fall of the Soviet Union and are the only leaders their respective

<sup>3</sup> Fund for Peace, *Failed States Index 2006*, <http://www.fundforpeace.org/programs/fsi/fsindex2006.php> (accessed October 6, 2006).

<sup>4</sup> Map downloaded from University of Texas at Austin Perry-Castaneda Library Map Collection: [http://www.lib.utexas.edu/maps/commonwealth/caucasus\\_cntrl\\_asia\\_pol\\_00.jpg](http://www.lib.utexas.edu/maps/commonwealth/caucasus_cntrl_asia_pol_00.jpg) (accessed May 25, 2007).

countries have known in the post-Soviet period. Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan are also the only two Central Asian states not to experience a leadership transition since independence.



**Figure 2. President Nursultan Nazarbayev (Kazakhstan) and President Islam Karimov (Uzbekistan).<sup>5</sup>**

## **B. IMPORTANCE**

The impending succession scenarios in Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan have the potential to be the watershed events for Central Asia since the fall of the Soviet Union. The manner in which succession occurs in these two states will not only have ramifications throughout the entire region but will have foreign policy and economic implications for global powers like the United States, Russia, and China. Both the United States and Russia have bases in Central Asia. And, while all three nations have substantial economic investments in the area, China is especially interested in regional stability, as Beijing seeks to both contain Muslim separatist aspirations in its adjoining Xinjiang region and to build substantial ties to Central Asia to gain access to the region's

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<sup>5</sup> Pictures downloaded from: The Official Site of the President of the Republic of Kazakhstan, [http://www.akorda.kz/www/www\\_akorda\\_kz.nsf/sections?OpenForm&id\\_doc=09D042CF5E283B45462572340019E679&lang=en&L1=L6#](http://www.akorda.kz/www/www_akorda_kz.nsf/sections?OpenForm&id_doc=09D042CF5E283B45462572340019E679&lang=en&L1=L6#) (accessed May 25, 2007); Republic of Uzbekistan, Portal of the State Authority, <http://www.gov.uz/en/section.scm?sectionId=1746> (accessed May 25, 2007).

petroleum resources. Major questions come to mind when looking at the transition problem: Will these leadership changes be peaceful or violent? Will they be managed handovers to pre-selected elites, 'hostile takeovers' within the elite structure, or revolutions of a democratic or Islamic character? What is the potential for state failure? What are the implications for the region? In the next section, the literature on succession in Central Asia will be examined to reveal a range of pessimistic opinions ranging from beliefs that Central Asia is not ready for democracy to the argument that the region is a potential powder keg of conflict.

### C. REVIEW OF VIEWS ON SUCCESSION

As is to be expected, the literature offers no definitive answers to the questions of who the next generation of leaders will be in Central Asia or how long the current presidents will choose to or be able to stay in office. However, writers grappling with this issue anchor their arguments in certain major themes. Focusing on some of these themes, this section details potential scenarios for succession: 1) the current regimes will perpetuate themselves and remain at the helm in some fashion; 2) the regimes will be overthrown in a secular revolution either before, during, or after a succession handover; or 3) an Islamic revolution will sweep the region either before, during, or after a succession handover.<sup>6</sup>

It is possible that the Presidents in question, Karimov and Nazarbayev, may successfully perpetuate their regimes in one form or another, as they appear to want their regime structures to survive past their time in office. Both rulers have already delayed the succession question through the use of referendums, changes in legislation, favorable court interpretations of term-limit rules in their constitutions, and controlled elections. They also eliminated opponents and some potential successors in ways that cast a shadow

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<sup>6</sup> Sally N. Cummings, "Introduction: Power and Change in Central Asia," In *Power and Change in Central Asia*, ed. Sally N. Cummings (London and New York: Routledge, 2002), 19; Mark N. Katz, "Revolutionary Change in Central Asia," *World Affairs* 168, no. 4 (Spring 2006): 157; John H. Herz, "The Problem of Successorship in Dictatorial Regimes: A Study in Comparative Law and Institutions," *The Journal of Politics* 14, no. 1 (February 1952): 30; Mark N. Katz, "Policy Watch: Revolution in Central Asia," United Press International, 14 January 2006, <http://www.upi.com/archive/view.php?archive=1&StoryID=20060113-112525-8230r> (accessed October 3, 2006).

over the predictability of the succession process. Nevertheless, while this has produced short term stability, sooner or later, succession will occur and the actions these men take will go a long way in determining the continuity with the regime that follows them and the long-term stability of their states.<sup>7</sup>

The literature of regime perpetuation suggests three broad paths that leaders have a tendency to pursue relative to their succession. First, the presidents may choose to select and groom a successor during their lifetime with the intention of either stepping down and handing over power or having power transfer at their death. In this vein, there are those who conjecture that Karimov and Nazarbayev may attempt to hand over power to one of their family members, specifically to one of their children, when they are ready for a transition. This was what Eric McGlinchey had in mind when he stated that “Central Asian rule today is moving more toward dynasty than toward democracy.”<sup>8</sup> Precedent for this exists in the post-Soviet period. Heydar Aliyev essentially handed over the presidency to his son, Ilham Aliyev, in Azerbaijan in October 2003. While there were complaints from opposition members, some nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), and even by the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), the new Azeri president was not ostracized in the international community and business deals continued unimpeded. Thus, the overall reception was not one that would deter others from attempting to emulate it. Additionally, Rafis Abazov views familial succession in power positions as a traditional machination for political elites in Central Asia and believes an attempt to keep political power within their respective extended family structure is realistic. This is a practice he dates from the time of the administrative offices under

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<sup>7</sup> Eric M. McGlinchey, “In For Life: Leadership Succession in Post-Soviet Central Asia,” PONARS Policy Memo 312 (November 2003): 3, [http://www.csis.org/media/csis/pubs/pm\\_0312.pdf](http://www.csis.org/media/csis/pubs/pm_0312.pdf) (accessed October 5, 2006); Mark N. Katz, “Policy Watch: C. Asian Strongmen Weak?,” United Press International, 6 November 2005, <http://www.upi.com/archive/view.php?archive+1&StoryID=20051104-081702-7495r> (accessed October 3, 2006); Eugene B. Rumer, “Central Asian Leadership Succession: When, Not If,” *Strategic Forum*, no. 203 (December 2003): 1.

Tsarist Russia. Abazov sees this as a further outgrowth of the fact that succession in Central Asia is far more likely to concentrate on personalities than on technical procedures.<sup>9</sup>

Yet, there are major questions about the relative acceptability to powerful political elites and the general public in these states of selecting one's progeny. With that in mind, if their immediate offspring are ruled out, there are indications that one of their children's spouses might rank high on the list of candidates or that the hand-picked successor will most likely rise from the pool of associates that surrounds each of these presidents. Russian President Boris Yeltsin did this with his selection of Vladimir Putin to succeed him in 1999.<sup>10</sup>

If Nazarbayev or Karimov choose to anoint a successor, the political patterns in the region virtually guarantee that this process will be largely opaque to outsiders. Media control in both states is extreme. Only a small group of elites from key government positions, businesses, and clans would be expected to play a role in the discussion. Concern for the personal security and economic well-being of both the current office-holders and their families will be a key point of negotiation. For example, protection from future prosecution and from attacks on family financial portfolios was apparently an important criterion in Yeltsin's aforementioned selection of Putin as his successor. Gregory Gleason directly alluded to this when he stated that "from the point of view of the political leadership, even more important than controlling the outcome of the election

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<sup>8</sup> McGlinchey, "In For Life," 1.

<sup>9</sup> Rafis Abazov, "Kyrgyzstan: The Political Succession Game," *Central Asia-Caucasus Analyst*, 24 September 2003, [http://www.cacianalyst.org/view\\_article.php?articleid=1760](http://www.cacianalyst.org/view_article.php?articleid=1760) (accessed October 5, 2006); Eugene Rumer, "Chaos, Not Democracy May Be Real Alternative to Dictators in Central Asia," *In The National Interest*, 18 July 2005, <http://www.inthenationalinterest.com/articles/july%202005/July2005RumerPFV.html> (accessed October 20, 2006).

<sup>10</sup> Ustina Markus, "Central Asia's Presidential Succession Prospects," *ISN Security Watch*, 29 March 2005, <http://www.isn.ethz.ch/news/sw/details.cfm?ID=11008> (accessed October 5, 2006); Abazov, "Kyrgyzstan"; Rumer, "Chaos, Not Democracy May Be Real Alternative to Dictators in Central Asia."

is controlling how the future leaders deal with the legacy of the past.”<sup>11</sup> His reference is not from a standpoint of an historical legacy, but from the much more practical fiscal and security angle cited above.

Does the grooming of a successor really matter? The literature indicates that it does. In the face of constitutional succession procedures that have not been tested, do not work, or are not intended to really be used, the selection of a successor in an authoritarian regime can help avoid a chaotic struggle when the current executive leaves office. Those holding this view argue that the current regime’s origins, ideology, goals, and characteristics ultimately do little to influence the chances for successful regime perpetuation. What matters is a “clear and unambiguous designation of a successor,” as this “seems to have been the decisive factor in successful transfers of power.”<sup>12</sup> This indicates that it would be rational to expect an autocrat to clearly name a replacement if he or she desires to have a ‘legacy regime.’ However, the calculation is not that uncomplicated or straightforward.

The flip side of this coin spotlights the preeminent goal of authoritarian leaders such as Nazarbayev and Karimov, which is the protection of their current status and their continuation in power for as long as they desire it. This is important because the literature also notes that the selection of a clear and unambiguous successor may serve to weaken an incumbent’s hold on the reins of power. Thus, there is a school of thought that says these authoritarians may avoid the selection of a successor during their lifetime. At its most basic, the appointment of a successor may create a ‘crown prince problem’ since anyone strong enough and ambitious enough to be selected for this role may become the focus of an independent power structure long before the incumbent is ready to leave the presidency.<sup>13</sup> Hence, fear may motivate the current presidents to simply not make a decision.

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<sup>11</sup> Gregory Gleason, “Red, Orange, Green, or Gray? Shades of Political Succession in Central Asia,” Central Asia-Caucasus Analyst, 12 January 2005, [http://www.cacianalyst.org/view\\_article.php?articleid=2952](http://www.cacianalyst.org/view_article.php?articleid=2952) (accessed October 5, 2006); Abazov, “Kyrgyzstan”; Markus, “Central Asia’s Presidential Succession Prospects”; Rumer, “Central Asian Leadership Succession,” 2.

<sup>12</sup> Herz, “The Problem of Successorship in Dictatorial Regimes,” 32, 36-7; Cummings, “Introduction: Power and Change in Central Asia,” 20.

<sup>13</sup> Herz, “The Problem of Successorship in Dictatorial Regimes,” 30.



Another factor that the literature identifies is a general hubris or feeling of ‘uniqueness,’ which may make them jealous of sharing the spotlight. A more practical issue to consider is that the appointee must be acceptable to all of the power centers that underpin the regime and, to a limited degree, the population in general. Designating one person could fracture alliances and prematurely generate a succession crisis. Consequently, the sitting presidents may avoid all of this by not designating anyone to follow them. If this is the case, we would expect to see potential successors eliminated and the creation of a ‘comfortable void’ in the system. While this avoids dangers to the leader and challenges to presidential authority in his lifetime, if followed, this course of action can leave the state open to confusion and conflict at the leader’s demise. This is the path believed most likely by analysts like Ustina Markus and Eugene Rumer.<sup>14</sup> According to Rumer, “given the hold on power of the current generation of leaders, the notion that any of them would initiate an orderly succession while they are still firmly in control or even in the event of a terminal illness appears highly doubtful.”<sup>15</sup>

If the incumbent autocrat does not select his successor, some other mechanism or a combination of formal and informal actors within the state structure itself will have to carry out this role. There are constitutional and electoral guidelines in place in both Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan, but, as we saw after the death of Saparmurat Niyzaov in Turkmenistan, these are unlikely to be followed. Additionally, the previously discussed Azerbaijani example demonstrated that Heydar Aliyev “failed to see transition in institutional terms and treated it as little more than a dynastic enterprise, seeking to hand over the presidency to his son rather than forge a meaningful compromise with the opposition and attempt to institutionalize a more open and transparent process.”<sup>16</sup>

The actual affect on succession of having a constitutional framework in place in an authoritarian state is indefinite. The literature typically disregards any prospect that elections would be followed in a free and fair manner in these cases and actually

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<sup>14</sup> Rumer, “Central Asian Leadership Succession,” 2; Markus, “Central Asia’s Presidential Succession Prospects”; Cummings, “Introduction: Power and Change in Central Asia,” 20; Herz, “The Problem of Successorship in Dictatorial Regimes,” 30, 39.

<sup>15</sup> Rumer, “Central Asian Leadership Succession,” 2.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

indicated that constitutional procedures seem to be benign or even supportive in the transfer of authority in an authoritarian regime. Pseudo-democratic constitutional provisions were considered even more amenable to elite manipulation than mechanisms in state systems of a more monarchical character. Even when these procedures were coupled with a forerunner's clearly stated desire for a particular successor the essential element seemed to be the clear statement of intention rather than the constitutional provisions. In effect, constitutional provisions are much more likely to be utilized by elites as a mere formality to legitimize closed-door decisions than as an instrument for lawful transition.<sup>17</sup>

If the decision of a successor is left to the system, the elements of the coalition which ultimately decides on a replacement will be both small and, yet, diverse. Informal institutional networks, i.e., clans, would be major participants in negotiations and their desires are likely to transcend those of formal bureaucratic actors in importance and be even less transparent to outside observers. Other prominent seats at the table will likely be occupied by senior personnel from the police, military, security services, and interior ministry. Support from these 'power ministries' represents a precondition for any future state leader. By virtue of their control over the means of violence, these institutions will rise to even greater importance should succession turn into a crisis and force be required to perpetuate the regime's hold on power. Elite business representatives, who are also likely to be senior clan leaders or senior bureaucrats, are expected to participate in the debate. Relying on others may have pitfalls for the autocrat hesitant or recalcitrant to announce a successor. The possibility exists that elements within this structure may take it into their own hands early in order to protect their long-term vested interests. Additionally, the hesitancy of either Nazarbayev or Karimov to name a successor may inadvertently raise the prestige of elements within the elite structure who ultimately gain enough influence to undermine incumbent desires. While elites may successfully

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<sup>17</sup> Herz, "The Problem of Successorship in Dictatorial Regimes," 21, 30-2, 38; Gleason, "Red, Orange, Green, or Gray?" Rumer, "Central Asian Leadership Succession," 2-3.

transition the state to a new leader without conflict in their ranks, any perceived leadership vacuum, however long or brief, may prove too tempting to groups promoting a more revolutionary outcome.<sup>18</sup>

Since independence, fear of secular revolutions has represented one of the primary justifications Central Asian leaders have utilized to avoid democratic reforms. Essentially, they maintain their citizens are not ready for democracy and in the absence of a strong hand the ‘rabble’ would destroy stability throughout the entire region. This threat has typically been laced with Islamist connotations—a potentiality that will be dealt with in the next section. The occurrence of ‘color revolutions’ in the post-Soviet countries of Georgia (Rose 2003), Ukraine (Orange 2004), and Kyrgyzstan (Tulip 2005) raised the specter for occurrences in other post-Soviet spaces. Askar Akayev’s ouster next door in Kyrgyzstan was particularly unnerving. As a consequence, Central Asian leaders took steps to keep themselves from being swept under during this ‘democratic wave,’ which also took the Lebanese Cedar Revolution in 2005 into account. Most authors attribute Akayev’s fall to the lack of force, particularly deadly force, in his response to the protests. While security forces were utilized, they were not allowed to fire on the crowd, which emboldened the protestors. Other contributing factors identified were the presence of NGOs from the western states, as well as from Georgia and the Ukraine, the opportunity to conduct exit polling that could be used to challenge the official results, and the presence of domestic and international media outlets broadcasting the story. However, despite expectations among some at the time, Akayev’s overthrow has produced no further episodes in the region to date.<sup>19</sup>

Authors also recognize that the Uzbek and Kazakh regimes are tougher on their political opponents, more firmly entrenched, and more likely to use deadly force in

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<sup>18</sup> Rumer, “Central Asian Leadership Succession,” 2-3; Herz, “The Problem of Successorship in Dictatorial Regimes,” 21, 30.

<sup>19</sup> Mark N. Katz, “Policy Watch: No More Color Revolutions?,” United Press International, 11 December 2005, <http://www.upi.com/archive/view.php?archive=1&StoryID=20051209-083447-1459r> (accessed October 3, 2006); Katz, “Policy Watch: Revolution in Central Asia”; Gleason, “Red, Orange, Green, or Gray?”; Katz, “C. Asian Strongmen Weak?”; Martha Brill Olcott, “The Next Act in Central Asia’s Transition Drama,” *The Moscow Times*, 12 April 2005, <http://www.carnegieendowment.org/publications/index.cfm?fa=view&id=16772&prog=zru> (accessed October 4, 2006).

similar situations. As evidenced by the events at Andijon in May 2005, Karimov has demonstrated his willingness to do so. And, while Nazarbayev has not been confronted by a similar situation and generally attempts to appear less heavy handed in his responses by co-opting or arresting opponents, authors allege that the Kazakh regime played a role in the death of at least two major political opponents, Zamanbek Nurkadilov (2005) and Altynbek Sarsenbaev (2006), and, that given Akayev's fate, it is unlikely Nazarbayev would restrain his security forces. In and of itself, the readiness and capacity to use force is cited as insurance for the survivability of these regimes in the near term. Moreover, other steps have been taken to ensure they are not added to the list of successful evictions.<sup>20</sup>

Tighter controls were placed on NGOs, measures were taken to prevent accurate independent exit polls, foreign journalists have been severely limited and some media outlets expelled, indigenous journalists work in an increasingly antagonistic environment, and greater restrictions on public assembly during elections were put in place in an attempt to prevent crowds from getting too large to control. Since the successful episodes occurred during elections and given that the electoral process will likely be utilized to legitimize any successor, these were obvious preventive steps to take. Additionally, in an attempt to combat negative reports about the lack of free and fair elections by western observers, the Uzbek and Kazakh regimes now bring in their own independent election observers, typically from Russia. The reports issued by these observers have been much more favorable although their views have not been accepted as accurate in the west and internal actors have reacted negatively to this orchestration as well. With this said, subsequent elections in Azerbaijan (November 2005) and

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<sup>20</sup> Gulnoza Saidazmova, "Kazakhstan: Opposition Blames Regime for Sarsenbaev's Death," *Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty*, 14 February 2006, <http://www.rferl.org/featuresarticle/2006/02/ea8e714f-fdd2-490f-8ced-1a0e2e416aac.html> (accessed October 27, 2006); Katz, "C. Asian Strongmen Weak"; Katz, "Revolutionary Change in Central Asia," 157-8; Cummings, "Introduction: Power and Change in Central Asia," 20.

Kazakhstan (December 2005) greatly diminished expectations that the current regimes would be overthrown or their hand-picked successors prevented from taking office by a mass mobilization.<sup>21</sup>

However, while the expectation of a secular revolution may have lost momentum, the underlying social, economic, and political conditions, which were cited as contributing factors in the previous color revolutions, remain present in Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan. The literature cites the possibility that these conditions could generate an Islamic revolution in the region. Mark Katz makes the point that “suppression of peaceful democratic revolutionary movements may not lead to stability of the authoritarian regimes, but instead to the rise of revolutionary movements that are neither peaceful nor democratic.”<sup>22</sup> This has been the main danger referenced by Central Asian leaders, particularly Karimov, for the last decade and a half. There are mixed reviews concerning the prospects for Islamic revolution, especially given the historic hold of the more tolerant Hanafi School of jurisprudence there. Nevertheless, there are Islamic organizations such as the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU) and Hizb ut-Tahrir actively advocating revolutionary and pan-nationalist goals. Additionally, given the tight controls on political expression in the region, Graham Fuller has observed that “political Islam still remains the only realistic major alternative to most of today’s authoritarian regimes.”<sup>23</sup>

Although it is unclear what electoral strength Islamic parties would have at the polls, the current regimes demonstrate no tolerance for their participation in the political process. Hence, they function underground in a fashion reminiscent of the Soviet period. It is worthy of note, however, that Islamic organizations appear to have played virtually no role in the Kyrgyz revolution. This begs a question. Why did they not seize the opportunity to act during the obvious turmoil there? The IMU has attempted to foment insurgency, but has thus far been unsuccessful either in its attempt to overthrow the

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<sup>21</sup> Saidazmova, “Kazakhstan: Opposition Blames Regime for Sarsenbaev’s Death”; Katz, “C. Asian Strongmen Weak”; Katz, “Revolutionary Change in Central Asia,” 157-8; Cummings, “Introduction: Power and Change in Central Asia,” 20.

<sup>22</sup> Katz, “Policy Watch: No More Color Revolutions?”

<sup>23</sup> Graham E. Fuller, *The Future of Political Islam* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan), 15; Ahmed Rashid, *Jihad: The Rise of Islam in Central Asia* (New York: Penguin Books, 2002), 26.

government in Uzbekistan or in just sustaining the existence of an active insurgency itself. Thus far the region has not been fertile ground for this style of regime change.<sup>24</sup>

A subdivision of the discussion of revolution broaches the possibility of a coup d'état. This scenario has both secular and religious angles. A coup could originate within the formal government structure itself, the informal elite power structure, moderate opposition figures within the elite, or through the infiltration of Islamists into the state security apparatus. The transition period during succession may provide the most fertile soil for this activity to be successful. While this is considered unlikely in Kazakhstan, it is viewed by Katz as possibly the most likely means of bringing down the Karimov government. The primary virtue of a coup lies in the fact that unlike the previously discussed revolutions and insurgencies, which take time and thus potentially provide some forewarning, a coup can strike without warning and be over so quickly that the regime may not be able to mount a defense.<sup>25</sup>

Ultimately, what the literature details is that revolutions to unseat the current presidents or their designated successors may be secular or religious in nature and that the road to both is potentially paved with similar social, political, and economic building blocks. Attempts to hang on to power until death or to hand-pick a successor may provide the spark to ignite a violent reaction from regime critics if the lives of citizens do not improve. As Markus points out, the post-Soviet populace was generally well educated and was told with the fall of communism that they were going to have better lives and more input into the political system. The retreat in both of these categories, as well as perceptions that the regimes are only serving their own fiscal interests, could prove to be a volatile mixture.<sup>26</sup> As Charles Fairbanks details the "leadership successions...open up the easiest path to sudden change."<sup>27</sup> Fairbanks maintains that the

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<sup>24</sup> Katz, "Policy Watch: Revolution in Central Asia"; Gleason, "Red, Orange, Green, or Gray?" Katz, "Revolutionary Change in Central Asia," 157, 162-3.

<sup>25</sup> Cummings, "Introduction: Power and Change in Central Asia," 20; Katz, "Revolutionary Change in Central Asia," 163-4.

<sup>26</sup> Charles H. Fairbanks, Jr., "Ten Years After the Soviet Breakup: Disillusionment in the Caucasus and Central Asia," *Journal of Democracy* 12, no. 4 (October 2001), 54; Markus, "Central Asia's Presidential Succession Prospects."

<sup>27</sup> Fairbanks, "Ten Years After the Soviet Breakup," 54.

decisive moment will be “the ‘free’ elections without which no successor president can claim legitimacy” and says that the ultimate question will be, how much fraud will simply be too much for the people to handle?<sup>28</sup> This could prove to be a major question.

Should a succession crisis arise and the regime strikes quickly, the literature is in basic agreement that the transition from incumbent to successor will be successful. However, in the event that it is protracted, the outcome becomes more obscure. A prolonged crisis is viewed by authors as a window of opportunity to derail the transition process. The likelihood exists that some faction in the elite structure that is vying for power will reach out to other blocs—secular or Islamist—that have been excluded from the political process to form an alliance in order to expand their power base. They may do this believing that they can control or discard these alliance partners after the crisis is over. If the balance of power tips away from the incumbent regime elements, the rest of the elite structure may remove their support in order to be on the likely winning side. Alternatively, these ‘outsider elements’ may be able to use this period of uncertainty to overthrow both the incumbent regime and their new ‘partners’. Robert Pastor states the key group to watch during such a situation is the middle class as he maintains that historically the side they choose to ally with typically wins. They have even been known to side with non-democratic parties in order to bring down a hated regime that has resisted democratization when they see no other alternative. Another group that will likely prove even more important in the Central Asian context is the conglomeration of various security organizations (police, military, security services, Interior Ministry, etc.). Their willingness or unwillingness to maintain support for the incumbent regime in a succession crisis will be a major determinant of who ultimately gains power.<sup>29</sup>

It is debated, however, whether there will be a succession crisis for any sub-groups to take advantage of. Although discussing Mobutu Sese Seko in 1988, Jean-Claude Willame could well have been speaking about the leaders in Central Asia when he said, “for many years ‘there has been a widespread sense of expectancy’ in Zaire, a

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<sup>28</sup> Fairbanks, “Ten Years After the Soviet Breakup,” 54.

<sup>29</sup> Robert A. Pastor, “Preempting Revolutions: The Boundaries of U.S. Influence,” *International Security* 15, no. 4 (Spring 1991), 77-78; Katz, “Policy Watch: Revolution in Central Asia”; Katz, “C. Asian Strongmen Weak”; Katz, “Revolutionary Change in Central Asia,” 159; Olcott, “The Next Act in Central Asia’s Transition Drama.”

premonition of 'fin de regime'."<sup>30</sup> Quoting Crawford Young, Willame expands this statement by stating that even though a "dissolution of the current fabric of power is an ever-present possibility...the surprising survival capacity of the regime makes risky any assertion of the inevitability of such a change."<sup>31</sup>

One factor cited by Rumer as putting "a brake on destabilizing tendencies in a succession crisis" is the lack of a strong, well-organized opposition structure in either of these countries.<sup>32</sup> This makes mobilization of the populace extremely difficult, particularly when dealing with governments that energetically crack down on any opposition. Rumer further argues that militant Islamist factions, specifically the IMU, were dealt a huge blow in Afghanistan and that no government in the region is likely to harbor them, as each regime views them as a common enemy. Thus, leaving them with a huge rebuilding process and logistical problem that they may be able to overcome in the long term, but not likely in time to affect the outcome of a succession crisis. Others argue that these regimes have proven to be quite durable and that while fraudulent elections did lead to overthrows in Georgia, Ukraine, and Kyrgyzstan many comparable elections have taken place in Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan without major disturbances. It is Eric McGlinchey's belief that "not since the Brezhnev period have Central Asian leaders been so thoroughly insulated from grassroots pressure."<sup>33</sup>

While it is debatable whether there will be a succession crisis or not, it is not debatable that succession will eventually occur in both Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan. The ages of the two leaders in question bear this simple fact out; Karimov was born on January 30, 1938 and Nazarbayev on July 6, 1940. It is also almost universally recognized that the absence of a stable, predictable succession system casts a major shadow over the future with many negative potential implications. Gregory Gleason argues that "the longer the adoption of an orderly procedure for political succession is

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<sup>30</sup> Jean-Claude Willame, "Political Succession in Zaire, or Back to Machiavelli," *The Journal of Modern African Studies* 26, no. 1 (March 1988): 37.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid.

<sup>32</sup> Rumer, "Central Asian Leadership Succession," 4.

<sup>33</sup> McGlinchey, "In for Life," 1; Katz, "Revolutionary Change in Central Asia," 158; Rumer, "Central Asian Leadership Succession," 4.



postponed, the more likely the succession will involve open conflict.”<sup>34</sup> As Rumer put it, “in the next ten years leadership succession will emerge as the most important political issue in Central Asia.”<sup>35</sup>

As inevitable as leadership change is, Rumer does not believe that it is certain that new leaders will mean new policies or ways of doing business and further asserts that the issue of succession is unlikely to destabilize the region. Conversely, Katz argues succession “may prove especially perilous for these regimes” and that, even if they are successful in negotiating the terrain this time, there is no guarantee that the successors will be able to avoid a crisis.<sup>36</sup> Much of the danger is generated by the nature of the regimes themselves. Each country has a presidential system which is so strong that the very system itself is identified with the individual leader, while the underpinning of that system is inhabited by a comparatively small number of elites working in a system that rewards loyalty. Thus, the informal rules are much more important than the formal ones. And, as Gleason stresses, the “political succession in these countries is apt to be decided outside of a competitive democratic process.”<sup>37</sup>

#### **D. METHODOLOGY**

Individual authors in the body of literature examined lay out many of the potential paths that succession may take. They correctly identify the nature of the regimes in question, as well as the importance of patronage networks that permeate the system. However, this is done in individual pieces with no real amalgamation of the data into a fused product. Essentially, the literature is devoid of a composite picture that brings together all of the elements including the neopatrimonial nature of these regimes and their possible intentions for succession, the clan politics that surrounds them, and the possible trajectories that political science theory demonstrates is possible. While precise predictions of exact succession outcomes for Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan are not

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<sup>34</sup> Gleason, “Red, Orange, Green, or Gray?”

<sup>35</sup> Rumer, “Central Asian Leadership Succession,” 1.

<sup>36</sup> Katz, “Revolutionary Change in Central Asia,” 159.

<sup>37</sup> Gleason, “Red, Orange, Green, or Gray?”; Rumer, “Central Asian Leadership Succession,” 1, 4, 6; Katz, “Policy Watch: C. Asian Strongmen Weak?”; Abazov, “Kyrgyzstan.”

possible, by putting these pieces of the puzzle together, we can form an image of what current trends indicate. The intention of this thesis is to do just that.

The cases of Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan will be examined utilizing various building blocks to construct my analysis of the succession issue. In Chapter II the first two pieces of the puzzle will be assembled. That chapter will explore the backgrounds of the two presidents and potential succession plans they may have. In addition, the effects of clan politics will be examined in each state to explore its potential effects on process outcomes. Chapter III will investigate possible trajectories for these regimes. Specifically, I will utilize Richard Snyder's theoretical work on the trajectories of neopatrimonial regimes to assess whether the literature implies that regime stability, revolution, military coup, or transition to democracy is most likely. Finally, Chapter IV will present an overall assessment and conclusions.<sup>38</sup>

It is not the intent of this thesis to utilize a crystal ball to predict the future; however, by examining incumbent intentions, the effects of clan politics, and the possible trajectories for these regimes presented in the literature, it is my belief that a cogent analysis can be performed to give us an idea of the situation these countries, and the region as a whole, may find themselves in when the time for succession arrives. This, in turn, will provide any planners concerned with stability issues in Central Asia a starting point to begin their preparations from.

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<sup>38</sup> Richard Snyder, "Explaining Transitions from Neopatrimonial Dictatorships," *Comparative Politics* 24, no. 4 (July 1992): 379-382.

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## **II. NATURE OF THE REGIMES**

### **A. INTRODUCTION**

This chapter examines the nature of the Karimov and Nazarbayev regimes. What it ultimately reveals are two neopatrimonial regimes that have taken extensive measures to strengthen their positions since the late 1980s. The patronage networks they have built control extensive resources. This makes the determination of who sits in the presidential seat extremely important, since it influences who has access to state resources for redistribution in their networks. The literature also shows that these regimes continue to take steps to perpetuate their current control and appear to have a desire for a controlled handoff of power when the time arises. However, any succession plans must take into account the underlying clan politics, which have played and continue to play a key role in the political life of both states. As Tajikistan revealed with its civil war in the 1990s, leaders ignore this element at their own peril.

### **B. NEOPATRIMONIALISM**

In a neopatrimonial regime the head of state derives his authority and legitimacy from patronage networks rather than an ideology or the rule of law. These regimes blend aspects from both patrimonial and legal-rational bureaucratic domination. Neopatrimonialism is characterized by the intertwining of the informal with the formal. The president wields tremendous formal power in relation to other government branches, while he or she also wields a great degree of informal power based on patron-client relations. Informal relationships cross over into, and dominate virtually all aspects of, the formal state structure and, in essence, this mixture becomes the institutionalized norm. The right to rule is embodied in a person instead of an office and the exercise of authority takes the form of transfers of public resources rather than formalized bureaucratic or legal practices. Government offices are conduits to personal or network enrichment rather than an opportunity for state betterment. As such, personal loyalty and dependence relationships define the entire structure. One's position in the state is defined by the

relationship with the leader. This creates a situation where government institutions have great difficulty in fulfilling, or do not even try to fulfill, their roles in delivering public goods and services to the populace. Policies are typically formulated for the good of the few rather than the welfare of the many. As a result, government institutions typically suffer from a lack of legitimacy. The unpredictability of elite actions can generate a sense of insecurity in those outside the halls of power due to the need to negotiate both the formal and informal structures in the state.<sup>39</sup>

In contrast to a bureaucratic-rational regime where positional appointments are based on personal merit—education level, training, entrance examination score—and the positions or offices have clearly defined responsibilities, as well as advancement criteria, the neopatrimonial structure is populated by officials who received their positions based on loyalty to a leader or group, clan or tribal membership, or some other measure not directly related to the functions of the position. These posts typically lack well-defined criteria for career advancement and have poorly defined responsibilities. That is not to say that all actions taken in this regard are made based on informal procedures. A certain percentage of positional appointments, business and professional licenses issued, and promotions granted may be made based on laws or administrative procedures; however, at a system level, corruption and nepotism hold sway.<sup>40</sup>

Neopatrimonialism is distinguishable from traditional patrimonialism. Richard Pipes defined patrimonialism as a “regime where the rights of sovereignty and those of ownership blend to the point of becoming indistinguishable, and political power is exercised in the same manner as economic power...the political structure becomes

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<sup>39</sup> John Ishiyama, “Neopatrimonialism and the Prospects for Democratization in the Central Asian Republics,” In *Power and Change in Central Asia*, ed. Sally N. Cummings (London and New York: Routledge, 2002), 43-4; Snyder, “Explaining Transitions from Neopatrimonial Dictatorships,” 379; Gero Erdmann and Ulf Engel, “Neopatrimonialism Revisited-Beyond a Catch-All Concept,” German Institute of Global and American Studies Working Papers, no. 16 (February 2006): 17-9, <http://www.giga-hamburg.de/workingpapers> (accessed October 23, 2006); Henry E. Hale, “Regime Cycles: Democracy, Autocracy, and Revolution in Post-Soviet Eurasia,” *World Politics* 58 (October 2005): 137-8.

<sup>40</sup> Jeff Goodwin, *No Other Way Out: States and Revolutionary Movements, 1945-1991* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 11-2; Erdmann and Engel, “Neopatrimonialism Revisited,” 17-8; Guenther Roth, “Personal Rulership, Patrimonialism, and Empire-Building in the New States,” *World Politics* 20, no. 2 (January 1968): 196.

essentially identical with that of a gigantic landed estate.”<sup>41</sup> A proprietary mindset is developed by those wielding power and, for all intents and purposes, “the economic element...absorbs the political.”<sup>42</sup> Guenther Roth described patrimonialism as “almost like traveling to the past” due to its reliance on hereditary succession and traditional forms of legitimization.<sup>43</sup> In patrimonial regimes all governmental transactions are considered personal transactions, as the line between public and private does not exist and there is what Gero Erdmann and Ulf Engel call a “direct dyadic exchange...between the little and big man.”<sup>44</sup> Conversely, neopatrimonial regimes recognize that there are both public and private spheres, although they typically do not observe the differentiation in practice, and, as a result, transactions take place within the skeleton of a modern state organism. These resource transfers concern goods that are recognized as public rather than private and are carried out by agents at each social level who act as a go-between in the exchanges linking the “big man” and the “little man.”<sup>45</sup>

Neither should neopatrimonial relationships be characterized as purely clientelistic in nature. Clientelism is more of a ‘business’ interaction involving two individuals not linked by another means and tied together only by the dealings in question and only for so long as the relationship continues to favor both parties or for as long as specific transactions last. Patronage networks in neopatrimonial terms, however, typically involve an affiliation between an individual and a larger group with social, familial, clan, tribal or other types of bonds that potentially fasten the parties together in a relationship related to more than just the next exchange of goods or support.<sup>46</sup>

Neopatrimonialism should also not be confused with ‘sultanism.’ As defined by H.E. Chehabi and Juan Linz, a sultanistic ruler “exercises his power without restraint, at

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<sup>41</sup> Richard Pipes, *Russia Under the Old Regime*, 2nd ed., (London and New York: Penguin Books, 1995), 22-4.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid., 22-4.

<sup>43</sup> Roth, “Personal Rulership, Patrimonialism, and Empire-Building in the New States,” 196.

<sup>44</sup> Erdmann and Engel, “Neopatrimonialism Revisited,” 20.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid., 18-20.

<sup>46</sup> Jean-Pascal Daloz, “‘Big Men’ in Sub-Saharan Africa: How Elites Accumulate Positions and Resources,” *Comparative Sociology* 2, no. 1 (February 2003): 278; Erdmann and Engel, “Neopatrimonialism Revisited,” 21.

his own discretion and above all unencumbered by rules or by any commitment to an ideology or value system.”<sup>47</sup> Loyalty emanates from fear and rewards, not ties of kinship, ideology, or abilities of the leader. The bureaucratic culture is regularly subverted by unpredictable and arbitrary decisions that do not have to be justified, as the ruler is not beholden to any class or group interests.<sup>48</sup> Pipes summed this as “the complete ownership of the land and mastery over the population.”<sup>49</sup> The two regime types do share similar methods for appointing government officials—again, based on relationships and deals, not personal qualifications and skill-sets—as well as tremendous power in the chief executive; however, there is a differentiation in degree. Chehabi and Linz describe this demarcation when they describe that “a regime in which some sultanistic tendencies are present, but where the circle of clients is wider and the discretion of the ruler less extensive, should be called neopatrimonial.”<sup>50</sup>

Presidents in a neopatrimonial state exercise power by allowing elites to use their official positions to advance their private interests or those of their group in exchange for loyalty and support. This builds a system based on mutual dependence. The executive depends on elites to carry out policies and to deliver supporters at the polls. Elites, in turn, rely on the leader to give them access to resources or positions of authority in the bureaucracy. This situation functions in large part because opportunities for wealth generation in these states rest in the access to state resources and institutions. Bureaucratic appointments bestow access to the informal income sources that are much more important and remunerative. In effect, it is much easier to become wealthy via the state than through legitimate business interests. Businessmen with no political connections have few opportunities and little chance for success in this environment. In this condition of public-private overlap, the public sector is usurped and arrogated by private interests. Of importance, the leader does not need to control the entire economy

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<sup>47</sup> H.E. Chehabi and Juan J. Linz, “A Theory of Sultanism 1: A Type of Nondemocratic Rule,” In *Sultanistic Regimes*, ed. H.E. Chehabi and Juan J. Linz (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998), 7.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid., 7-10; Roth, “Personal Rulership, Patrimonialism, and Empire-Building in the New States,” 203.

<sup>49</sup> Pipes, *Russia Under the Old Regime*, 22.

<sup>50</sup> Chehabi and Linz, “A Theory of Sultanism 1,” 9-10.

to make this work. Only key sectors, such as oil, natural gas, gold, or cotton, need be controlled to effectively perpetuate the patronage system that brings together the coalition of vested elites necessary to underpin a government.<sup>51</sup>

If any individual or faction stops supporting the executive or loses his approval, positions will likely be forfeited, depriving them of access to state resources and sources of income.<sup>52</sup> It was not surprising to McGlinchey that the presidents being discussed here repressed elites. What was surprising to him is that “those who are most harshly treated are wayward members of the internal elite, not activists from the political opposition,” which effectively delivers the message that “internal challenges will not be tolerated.”<sup>53</sup> The potential to lose their power and authority makes participants reluctant to challenge the chief executive. Leaders are aided by the general level of greed and rivalry that exists within the overall elite structure. The ability to use selective repression, along with the ability to bequeath huge rewards, gives executives a great deal of maneuver room due to the requirement for elites to act collectively if they are to successfully oppose him. Given the president’s access to resources, elites contemplating a challenge can never be certain of the loyalty of their peers due to the possibility that the leader may be able to secretly co-opt individuals or factions.<sup>54</sup> Thus, these leaders are “in an excellent position to divide and rule elites and thereby to dry up political opportunities and resources available to opponents.”<sup>55</sup>

Of critical significance, however, is Hale’s observation that this calculation changes when regimes enter a ‘lame-duck’ phase. Hale maintains that understanding the lame-duck syndrome gives major insight into why Georgia, Ukraine, and Kyrgyzstan experienced color revolutions, while other post-Soviet states have not. This phenomenon is generated when elites perceive a transfer of power is in the offing. Whether the

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<sup>51</sup> Daloz, “‘Big Men’ in Sub-Saharan Africa,” 271, 276, 278; McGlinchey, “In For Life,” 2; Erdmann and Engel, “Neopatrimonialism Revisited,” 21; Katz, “Policy Watch: C. Asian Strongmen Weak?” Katz, “Revolutionary Change in Central Asia,” 159; Hale, “Regime Cycles,” 138.

<sup>52</sup> Hale, “Regime Cycles,” 138-9; Katz, “C. Asian Strongmen Weak?”; Katz, “Revolutionary Change in Central Asia,” 159.

<sup>53</sup> McGlinchey, “In For Life,” 2.

<sup>54</sup> Katz, “C. Asian Strongmen Weak?” Katz, “Revolutionary Change in Central Asia,” 159.

<sup>55</sup> Hale, “Regime Cycles,” 139.



departure is due to an illness, term limits, critical loss of public support, or an announced exit does not matter. What is significant is the dynamic generated by this impending departure which potentially leaves the leader in an impotent position—unable to deliver rewards or punishment in an effective manner. When the president has solid control, a high level of elite cohesion is the norm. Once the future is in doubt and elites begin to feel that they can act with relative impunity, this accord begins to splinter and factions form around potential successors. Elites will attempt to ensure they end up on the winning side. Defection from the incumbent's intended heir, if one has been named, may occur if elites do not believe this person will honor previous patronage arrangements or powerful factions form around a more popular choice. Additionally, blocs may put forward a challenger in an attempt to change the relative balance-of-power within the patronage system at this critical juncture. If no clear successor comes to the fore early in the process, infighting can be brutal with all parties mobilizing their resource bases, which can include bringing followers into the streets. In Hale's view, a popular incumbent is more likely to be able to have a successful hand-off to a hand-picked successor, while a less popular leader may fail in this regard. The critical piece of this argument is that neither Kazakhstan nor Uzbekistan has entered this lame-duck phase as Nazarbayev and Karimov have successfully pushed their exits into the future and, as a consequence of this, elites have seen defection as an extremely risky proposition.<sup>56</sup>

Neopatrimonial leaders grow to be considered 'unique' individuals, which interleaves special problems into the political system when the question of succession is raised.<sup>57</sup> As Roger Kangas stated, it is "one of the pitfalls of relying on the personal authority of a president at the expense of a system of government."<sup>58</sup> John Ishiyama further argues that transitions in neopatrimonial systems are exceptionally challenging

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<sup>56</sup> Hale, "Regime Cycles," 135, 139-41, 143, 159.

<sup>57</sup> Herz, "The Problem of Successorship in Dictatorial Regimes," 19.

<sup>58</sup> Roger D. Kangas, "The Sacrifices of Strong States," *Perspectives on Central Asia* 2, no. 7 (October 1997), <http://www.eisenhowerinstitute.org/programs/globalpartnerships/securityandterrorism/coalition/regionalrelations/OtherPubs/Kangas.htm> (accessed October 5, 2006).

due to the “legacy of the concentration of power in such ‘strong presidential’ systems.”<sup>59</sup> This raises serious questions. How do you replace this “unique and unrepeatable personality?”<sup>60</sup> Is the ‘mystique’ transferable to another person or an institution? How will future leaders achieve legitimacy? Answers to these questions are critical to the future of the regime and affect many decisions leaders make as they move later and later into their tenure. The answers to these questions help determine if succession will cause a ‘crisis’ or is merely just another event in the political life of a state. Even with constitutional frameworks in place that dictate elections or spell out the mode of succession should a leader die in office, there are no guarantees that these mechanisms will be allowed to run their course.<sup>61</sup> Whatever the outcome of the succession phase, Richard Snyder states that successor regimes “are often not well institutionalized and consequently tend to be unstable.”<sup>62</sup>

According to Herz, this problem has traditionally “been considered as insoluble through rational legal means.”<sup>63</sup> The lack of an orderly departure was identified as a huge drawback of forms of government centered on an individual. Historically, creating a hereditary monarchy was considered the way of solving this; however, monarchy is no longer considered a viable option for many reasons, not the least of which is that it is not compatible with the democratic veneer that these regimes have erected. On the other hand, the role of the ‘lieutenants’ that run the regime machinery has been explored more recently and these individuals are considered potential answers to this quandary by virtue of their positions around the leader. They form a “leadership pool for successorship.”<sup>64</sup> That these subordinates likely received their positions based on being representatives of vested interests, which likely played a role in the regime’s creation and perpetuation,

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<sup>59</sup> Ishiyama, “Neopatrimonialism and the Prospects for Democratization in the Central Asian Republics,” 47.

<sup>60</sup> Herz, “The Problem of Successorship in Dictatorial Regimes,” 28.

<sup>61</sup> Kangas, “The Sacrifices of Strong States”; Herz, “The Problem of Successorship in Dictatorial Regimes,” 19-20, 28; Ishiyama, “Neopatrimonialism and the Prospects for Democratization in the Central Asian Republics,” 47-8.

<sup>62</sup> Snyder, “Explaining Transitions from Neopatrimonial Dictatorships,” 380.

<sup>63</sup> Herz, “The Problem of Successorship in Dictatorial Regimes,” 20.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid.

strengthens this line of thought.<sup>65</sup> While “almost anything, at such a moment, is politically possible,” vested interests in neopatrimonial regimes are very likely to attempt to stabilize the situation and perpetuate their interests.<sup>66</sup> These vested interests include the clans, which this chapter now turns to.

### C. CLAN POLITICS

Clan politics is a major force under-girding current Central Asian regimes. Central Asia’s presidents do not maintain their status as a result of being the head of major political parties or by being in charge of the military. They maintain their status by “being at the head of networks of elites who seek to retain firm control over the state both to remain in power and to advance their own private interests.”<sup>67</sup> These networks represent the clan structure that permeates society in what Kathleen Collins likened to a “clan-based authoritarianism.”<sup>68</sup> Using Collins’ definition, a clan is “an informal social institution in which actual or notional kinship based on blood or marriage forms the central bond among members.”<sup>69</sup> This identity is considered stronger in Central Asia than national, linguistic, or religious bonds and provides a web of relationships that may encompass approximately 2,000 to 20,000 people. Although typically associated with a particular location due to the ease of maintaining associations, the familial nature of the clan bond allows them to survive across spatial separation.<sup>70</sup>

The leaders standing atop these structures derive their prominence from birth, marriage, personal connections, or individual accomplishments. They serve numerous functions that broadly control how money and power are distributed to members. Non-elites depend on leaders to provide security, dispute resolution, access to jobs, access to

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<sup>65</sup> Herz, “The Problem of Successorship in Dictatorial Regimes,” 20, 28-9.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid., 29.

<sup>67</sup> Katz, “Policy Watch: C. Asian Strongmen Weak?”; Katz, “Revolutionary Change in Central Asia,” 159.

<sup>68</sup> Kathleen Collins, “Clans, Pacts, and Politics in Central Asia,” *Journal of Democracy* 13, no. 3 (July 2002): 150.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid., 142.

<sup>70</sup> Kathleen Collins, “The Political Role of Clans in Central Asia,” *Comparative Politics* 35, no. 2 (January 2003): 171, 173-4; Collins, “Clans, Pacts, and Politics in Central Asia,” 142-3.

education, access to goods, personal loans, and to serve as guarantors for business transactions. In effect, the clan appropriates the role of the central government and provides a form of social safety net. Clan elites depend on the non-elites' allegiance and respect in order to maintain their status in society, to protect clan interests, and to make new gains in power. This network functions as an alternative to official bureaucracies when formal institutions are weak or not present.<sup>71</sup> As Collins stated, they "reduce the high transaction costs of making deals...[where] stable expectations are hard to form."<sup>72</sup> The interactions occurring both within a clan and between clans in the competition for state offices and resources are referred to as 'clan politics.'<sup>73</sup>

Soviet rule wrecked havoc on most larger tribal identities in Central Asia, but collectivized agricultural practices, for instance, only served to strengthen the clans, which went underground during the roughly seven decades of communist rule. Clans used Soviet institutions to further their own agendas. This was largely ignored under Leonid Brezhnev. However, Yuri Andropov and Mikhail Gorbachev sought an end to the policy of letting Central Asians govern the republics largely how they wished as long as they did not challenge the communist party and attempted to purge clan patronage. This resulted in 30,000 arrests across the region and the installation of an ethnically Russian cohort of bureaucrats. The extensive power losses created unity across clan networks and a focus on resistance among leaders, who saw Moscow as a common threat. As the Soviet state weakened, clans reasserted themselves through riots that discredited Gorbachev's appointees. Clan leaders and Gorbachev subsequently agreed on compromise candidates, Karimov and Nazarbayev, to serve as republic first secretaries. Neither was perceived by Moscow or the rival clans as too strong or well entrenched to be a threat. This is in stark contrast to the 'Big Man' persona each portrays and to the idea that each would have their people and the world believe—that they rose to power on

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<sup>71</sup> Kathleen Collins, "The Logic of Clan Politics: Evidence from the Central Asian Trajectories," *World Politics* 56 (January 2004): 224, 232; Collins, "The Political Role of Clans in Central Asia," 173-4, 177-8, 186; Collins, "Clans, Pacts, and Politics in Central Asia," 142-3, 148.

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*, 142.

<sup>73</sup> Collins, "The Logic of Clan Politics: Evidence from the Central Asian Trajectories," 224, 232; Collins, "The Political Role of Clans in Central Asia," 177-8; Collins, "Clans, Pacts, and Politics in Central Asia," 143, 148.

their remarkable accomplishments and leadership qualities. With stability restored and Central Asians back in control, the clans found themselves in a relative balance-of-power situation everywhere except Tajikistan, which played a major role in its future conflict.<sup>74</sup>

Stability in post-Soviet Central Asia was facilitated by the informal pacts negotiated among clan elites in each state—part of which led to the aforementioned selection of Karimov and Nazarbayev. According to Collins, pacts between clans build stability by establishing a balance-of-power relationship and by instituting informal rules to govern how state resources will be dealt with outside of the formal constructs.<sup>75</sup> Clans construct these arrangements when three conditions are met: “1) A shared external threat induces cooperation among clans that otherwise have insular interests, 2) A balance of power exists among the major clan factions, such that none can dominate, and 3) A legitimate broker, a leader trusted by all factions, assumes a role of maintaining the pact and the distribution of resources that it sets in place.”<sup>76</sup> Karimov and Nazarbayev play the role of legitimate broker in this equation. Pacts are particularly important in order to avoid collapse and violence when there is a shock in the system. With a pact, you had Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, and Kyrgyzstan, while, without a pact, you had the Tajik civil war.<sup>77</sup>

Many observers expected religious and ethnic turmoil in the region when the Soviet Union ceased to exist and, yet, this did not happen. While containing Islamist participants, the war in Tajikistan was more of an inter-clan power struggle. Collins also views the clans as a form of insulation against the attraction of Islamist movements. Harkening back to the pre-Soviet days, religious leaders occupied a subordinate position to the clan elders on the communal governing committees. Religious leaders had very specific religious duties that were supervised by this committee. Collins maintains that

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<sup>74</sup> Brenda J. Clay, “Other Times, Other Places: Agency and the Big Man in Central New Ireland,” *Man*, new series, 27, no. 4 (December 1992): 719-33; Collins, “The Political Role of Clans in Central Asia,” 176; Collins, “Clans, Pacts, and Politics in Central Asia,” 141-2, 144; Collins, “The Logic of Clan Politics,” 240-1, 260; Olivier Roy, *The New Central Asia: The Creation of Nations* (New York: New York University Press, 2000), 112, 128-30.

<sup>75</sup> Collins, “The Logic of Clan Politics,” 224, 237-8; Collins, “The Political Role of Clans in Central Asia,” 184.

<sup>76</sup> Collins, “The Logic of Clan Politics,” 237.

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.*, 224, 237-8; Collins, “Clans, Pacts, and Politics in Central Asia,” 145.

Islam is still subordinate to the clan and, to support this idea, states that 96 percent of villagers she surveyed replied that religious authorities from outside their region would be rejected. In the post-Soviet period there was a resurgence of ‘popular Islam,’ but religious teachers attempting to bring ‘foreign versions’ of Islam have for the most part been rebuffed. Thus, explaining the difficulty for Salafist groups, such as the IMU, to recruit in regime-threatening numbers in the area to this point.<sup>78</sup>

Clans can have destabilizing effects of their own. While there is a formal constitution delineating institutional responsibilities, pacts create a shadow system that has little to do with, and is most often superseding of, the formal institutions. The informal becomes, in a sense, institutionalized. Clan bargaining tables are where the major state decisions are made, not legislative bodies. Referring back to the discussion of neopatrimonialism, these networks award jobs based on personal connections rather than skills. They engage in asset stripping to deliver resources to their network. In a good economy, this may just ‘feed the machine’ with the resultant effects that resentment builds among the have-nots and state weakness in the delivery of public goods is demonstrated. In bad economic conditions, asset stripping quickens as clans attempt to ensure they get all they can of the ever shrinking pie, which further weakens state capabilities, creating the potential for state bankruptcy and failure. If the regime perceives what is occurring, it will likely break the pact by attempting to exclude clans that it can no longer afford to patronize.<sup>79</sup> “A broken pact weakens regime durability” and greatly increases the potential for inter-clan violence.<sup>80</sup>

Clan politics has a ‘crowding out’ effect in the political spectrum. Formal institutions are sidelined by the ability of clan leaders to organize their followers. This effectively removes forms of political participation from the public sphere. Elites have no need to create formal political parties, when they can simply mobilize their networks and ‘get out the vote.’ Thus, they often avoid the uncertainties and expenses associated

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<sup>78</sup> Roy, *The New Central Asia*, 131, 151-7; Collins, “The Political Role of Clans in Central Asia,” 171, 178, 181-3, 190; Collins, “Clans, Pacts, and Politics in Central Asia,” 145; Collins, “The Logic of Clan Politics,” 224; Vitaly V. Naumkin, *Radical Islam in Central Asia: Between Pen and Rifle* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publisher, Inc., 2005), 10, 21, 38, 40-3, 60.

<sup>79</sup> Collins, “The Logic of Clan Politics,” 243-5.

<sup>80</sup> *Ibid.*, 245.

with the creation of parties, formal platforms, and genuine campaigns. While these organizations and actions might, in reality, generate a more wide-ranging support base for particular elites across the state, they would also entail the uncertainty, fickleness, and unreliability of western-style voting constituencies versus the ‘sure-thing’ their clan networks represent. What suffers in this situation is any prospect for real competitive voting.<sup>81</sup>

This essay now turns to an examination of these concepts as they relate to Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan. Specifically, beginning with Uzbekistan, the backgrounds of the neopatrimonial regimes embodied in and led by Karimov and Nazarbayev will be explored. Each arrived at his current station in life via a similar seminal set of events, but by traveling dramatically different roads to get there. This will be combined with an inspection of the clan structures which both pervade the societies in each of these states and have a direct impact on the shape of the political system that administers them. The description of these affinity groupings differs slightly in each state, but what will be shown is that they similarly affect aspects of life at all levels from basic everyday issues such as employment all the way to government policy, and more important for this work, the issue of succession. Finally, specific potential successors will be investigated, starting with the current incumbents. While no definitive successor or succession scenario appears to have been decided, there are a number of potential individuals in both countries that circulate in the literature.

#### **D. BACKGROUND, CLAN STRUCTURES, AND POTENTIAL SUCCESSION INTENTIONS**

##### **1. Uzbekistan**

As Kangas put it, “if one were to gauge the possibility of ‘future leadership’, Islam Karimov would probably not be high on anyone’s list in the 1960s and 1970s—during his formative years.”<sup>82</sup> Donald Carlisle further states that “nothing in his early

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<sup>81</sup> Collins, “The Logic of Clan Politics,” 245.

<sup>82</sup> Roger D. Kangas, “Uzbekistan: The Karimov Presidency—Amir Timur Revisited,” In *Power and Change in Central Asia*, ed. Sally N. Cummings (London & New York: Routledge, 2002), 133.

life...or in mid-career suggested he was likely to emerge at the top of the political pyramid.”<sup>83</sup> Karimov’s appointment by Mikhail Gorbachev to replace Rafiq Nishanov as the First Secretary of the Uzbek Soviet Socialist Republic (SSR) in June 1989 and subsequent election to the Presidency in March 1990 were quite unanticipated by outside observers. Karimov essentially emerged from the political exile of being First Secretary of the Kashkadarya Oblast, which Nishanov had consigned him to in 1988. Even before that he was an economic technocrat, not a politician. After serving for several years as a Gosplan (State Committee for Planning) bureaucrat, Karimov became the Uzbek SSR’s Minister for Finance from 1983 to 1986 under Inamzhan Usmankhodzhaev. Before this position he had held no party post at any level.<sup>84</sup>

The story of Karimov’s rise really begins with his exile by Nishanov, who was largely acting out the traditional action of cleaning out a predecessor’s supporters and replacing them with one’s own. As was previously noted, his ascension occurred during Moscow’s attempts to root out patronage networks in the region. This resulted in a series of demonstrations in Uzbekistan culminating in the June 1989 Ferghana Valley riots that were Nishanov’s demise.<sup>85</sup> This coupled with Gorbachev’s other distractions during the period led to a scenario where Karimov rose “to power as a compromise political figure between regional bosses and the central government.”<sup>86</sup> Being demoted by Nishanov had helped Karimov in two ways. First, it won him the respect of local elites battling Moscow for control of the republic and, second, it kept him out of Moscow’s view during their ‘cotton scandal’ anticorruption purge that saw roughly 58,000 officials replaced, leaving him untainted and acceptable in Gorbachev’s eyes. Moscow was primarily looking for stability in the republic by 1989 and Karimov was a communist apparatchik with a ‘clean record.’ Additionally, Karimov was even more acceptable to both Moscow

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<sup>83</sup> Donald S. Carlisle, “Geopolitics and Ethnic Problems of Uzbekistan and Its Neighbors,” In *Muslim Eurasia: Conflicting Legacies*, ed. Yaacov Ro’i (London: Frank Cass, 1995), 80.

<sup>84</sup> Alisher Ilkhamov, “Controllable Democracy in Uzbekistan,” *Middle East Report*, no. 222 (Spring 2002): 8; Roger D. Kangas, “Uzbekistan: Evolving Authoritarianism,” *Current History* 93, no. 582 (April 1994): 178; Kathleen A. Collins, “Clans, Pacts, and Politics: Understanding Regime Transition in Central Asia” (PhD diss., Stanford University, 1999), 186.

<sup>85</sup> Carlisle, “Geopolitics and Ethnic Problems of Uzbekistan and Its Neighbors,” 79-80.

<sup>86</sup> Ilkhamov, “Controllable Democracy in Uzbekistan,” 10.



and the local elites because they believed that his lack of a strong personal support base would keep him dependent on them. Regional clan leaders like Ismail Jurabekov, the Minister of Water Management who wanted Karimov because he is also from Samarkand, and Shukrullo Mirsaidov, the mayor of Tashkent and a friend of Karimov's, expected to be rewarded for their support once he assumed power.<sup>87</sup>

Early in his tenure Karimov fulfilled their expectations, as he was, in fact, dependent on the elites who had brought him to power. There was not a universal acceptance of him occupying the position over the long-term, so he needed to build legitimacy by demonstrating that the informal pact between the regional elites would be carried out. Initially, Karimov curried favor with a thorough de-Russification of appointees made by his predecessor—a move which also allowed him to begin placing his own loyalists in key posts. A balance-of-power among these factions was achieved via their inclusion in positions in the central government and through the access to state resources that these positions brought. After the failed coup attempt against Gorbachev in August 1991, Karimov began to consolidate his hold on the reins of power.<sup>88</sup>

Initially this took the form of consolidating control over the power ministries in the republic—the military and various security forces.<sup>89</sup> It also included sidelining potential rivals such as his previous supporter Mirsaidov. Carlisle refers to this battle as “a struggle between two bears that could not continue unresolved much longer.”<sup>90</sup> Mirsaidov's Tashkent-based supporters had only agreed to Karimov's selection after Mirsaidov was tapped for the newly created position of vice-president. Shortly after the August coup attempt, they once again attempted to shift power to Mirsaidov. Karimov responded to this “coup” attempt by abolishing the Communist Party, which stripped

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<sup>87</sup> Alisher Ilkhamov, “The Limits of Centralization: Regional Challenges in Uzbekistan,” In *The Transformation of Central Asia: States and Societies from Soviet Rule to Independence*, ed. Pauline Jones Luong (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2004), 178-9; Carlisle, “Geopolitics and Ethnic Problems of Uzbekistan and Its Neighbors,” 79-80; Collins, “Clans, Pacts, and Politics: Understanding Regime Transition in Central Asia,” 185-7, 195.

<sup>88</sup> Ilkhamov, “The Limits of Centralization,” 178-9; Carlisle, “Geopolitics and Ethnic Problems of Uzbekistan and Its Neighbors,” 80; Collins, “Clans, Pacts, and Politics: Understanding Regime Transition in Central Asia,” 185-7, 193-5.

<sup>89</sup> Ibid., 283.

<sup>90</sup> Carlisle, “Geopolitics and Ethnic Problems of Uzbekistan and Its Neighbors,” 81.

many of his opponents of their access to state assets. Karimov moved directly against Mirsaidov by abolishing the office of vice-president. Demonstrations resulting in several deaths subsequently occurred in Tashkent. Economic conditions were cited as their impetus, but some analysts view the protests as a direct outgrowth of the power struggle between Karimov and Mirsaidov. Karimov carried out a harsh crackdown that was a picture of things to come. Mirsaidov was later jailed in 1994 for corruption and embezzlement, technically removing his ability to run for the presidency according to Uzbek law.<sup>91</sup>

In Uzbekistan's first presidential election in December 1991, Karimov won a landslide victory—in an election that was considered neither free nor fair—over the only candidate allowed to run, Muhammad Salih of the Erk (Freedom) Party with roughly 86 percent of the vote. Birlik (Unity), the party considered most threatening, had been banned. Salih polled strongly only in his home region of Khorezm where he had strong clan support and among some of Tashkent's intelligentsia. After the results were announced, Salih challenged them charging fraud. He was briefly arrested and has lived in exile since 1992. In addition, Karimov clamped down on the Khorezm region.<sup>92</sup>

After the election, Karimov began a concerted attempt to consolidate power in the office of the presidency. A task Pauline Jones Luong believes was effectively completed with the adoption of the Constitution of the Republic of Uzbekistan in 1992. This document authorized the president to appoint and dismiss the prime minister and his deputies, all judges in the judicial branch, the cabinet of ministers, all administrative

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<sup>91</sup> Carlisle, "Geopolitics and Ethnic Problems of Uzbekistan and Its Neighbors," 81-2; Pauline Jones Luong, "Ethno-politics and Institutional Design: Explaining the Establishment of Electoral Systems in Post-Soviet Central Asia" (PhD diss., Harvard University, 1997), 148, 311; Collins, "Clans, Pacts, and Politics: Understanding Regime Transition in Central Asia," 285-6; Freedom House, *Nations in Transit 1998* (New York: Freedom House, 1998), 644, 646, <http://unpan1.un.org/intradoc/groups/public/documents/NISPAcee/UNPAN008394.pdf> (accessed June 15, 2007).

<sup>92</sup> Ilkhamov, "Controllable Democracy in Uzbekistan," 8-9; Brian Quillen, "Democracy—A Tree Without Roots on the Steppes of Central Asia" (master's thesis, Naval Postgraduate School, 2006), 41, 46; Collins, "Clans, Pacts, and Politics: Understanding Regime Transition in Central Asia," 195, 281, 286-7.

heads, and the prosecutor general. The president could declare states of emergency, dissolve parliament, whose seats were cut from 450 to 250, and had to approve the Speaker of Parliament, as well as the head of the Central Bank. The cabinet's power was minimized by installing young technocrats with no power base other than Karimov. He shifted the focus to executive branch advisors and to regional governors (hokims), a position he created to replace the regional first secretaries and one which he had the power to make direct appointments to. The hokims were selected from local power brokers, who now owed their positions to Karimov. Thus, elements from all regional elite factions in the state were essentially bought off and tied directly to his authority.<sup>93</sup>

Only pro-government parties were allowed to register and compete after the initial election. While professing that he has put Uzbekistan on a democratic path, Karimov was never a democrat or dedicated to political pluralism.<sup>94</sup> He was an apparatchik, who opposed the dissolution of the USSR, and has subsequently “presented himself as the ‘strong hand’ necessary to stave off domestic chaos, interethnic conflict, and religious fundamentalism.”<sup>95</sup> When all of these maneuvers are examined together, Collins correctly asserts that “the result of his policies from 1990 through 1993 was the gradual transformation from a communist regime to an autocratic one, in which power belonged not to a hegemonic party, but to Karimov himself and the clique of clan and regional elites who surrounded him.”<sup>96</sup>

#### *a. Clan Politics in Uzbekistan*

Karimov's lineage hampered him. He does not come from a prominent family within the Samarkand clan. This meant that, while he always had some clan

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<sup>93</sup> Luong, “Ethno-politics and Institutional Design: Explaining the Establishment of Electoral Systems in Post-Soviet Central Asia,” 195; Ilkhamov, “Controllable Democracy in Uzbekistan,” 8-9; Collins, “Clans, Pacts, and Politics: Understanding Regime Transition in Central Asia,” 287.

<sup>94</sup> Quillen, “Democracy—A Tree Without Roots on the Steppes of Central Asia,” 41; Collins, “Clans, Pacts, and Politics: Understanding Regime Transition in Central Asia,” 281.

<sup>95</sup> Collins, “Clans, Pacts, and Politics: Understanding Regime Transition in Central Asia,” 282.

<sup>96</sup> *Ibid.*, 291.

support, he was not a leader and had to use other methods to consolidate his position.<sup>97</sup> This is a significant point because “the continuing importance of clanism in the state [is] stressed as the most important aspect of political life.”<sup>98</sup> Historically, most Uzbeks belonged to the Kipchak, Oghuz, Qungrat, Qarluq, Jalair, Barlas, Manghit, Laquay, and Yuz tribes; however, tribal affiliations appear to hold little, if any, value to the population in the post-Soviet period. It is the clan that plays the relevant role. The major clans include Samarkand (also includes Bukhara and Jizzak), Tashkent, Ferghana, Andijon, Namangan, and Khorezm. As the names reveal, these are regional groupings based on settled agricultural areas, typically oasis cities. In addition to blood lines and marital alliances, they include village and city groupings.<sup>99</sup> “The inner relationships within a clan are based on principles of paternalism, hierarchy and coercion, thus forming an institution of government characteristic of a traditional rural community.”<sup>100</sup>

During the Soviet period, politics was dominated by the Tashkent, Ferghana, and Samarkand clans. Competition among them was fierce and each brought specific strengths to the table that curried favor with Moscow. Tashkent had the largest number of workers, while Samarkand and Ferghana produced large quantities of the all important white gold—cotton. Legislative representation was balanced in the Uzbek SSR Supreme Soviet between these three and their representatives held the chief power positions in the republic. A break out of the First Secretaries of the Communist Party of Uzbekistan illustrates this dynamic (see Table 1).<sup>101</sup>

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<sup>97</sup> Kangas, “Uzbekistan: Amir Timur Revisited,” 138; Arkady Dubnov, “Preparations for the power change begins in Uzbekistan,” *Ferghana.ru*, February 17, 2005, <http://enews.ferghana.ru/article.php?id=820> (accessed October 3, 2006).

<sup>98</sup> Anita Sengupta, *The Formation of the Uzbek Nation-State: A Study in Transition* (Oxford: Lexington Books, 2003), 285.

<sup>99</sup> Anthony R. Bichel, “Contending Theories of Central Asia: The Virtual Realities of Realism, Critical IR and the Internet” (PhD diss., University of Hawaii, 1997), 71, 75; Collins, “Clans, Pacts, and Politics: Understanding Regime Transition in Central Asia,” 490; Quillen, “Democracy—A Tree Without Roots on the Steppes of Central Asia,” 54; Collins, “The Political Role of Clans in Central Asia,” 176.

<sup>100</sup> Demian Vaisman, “Regionalism and Clan Loyalty in the Political Life of Uzbekistan,” In *Muslim Eurasia: Conflicting Legacies*, ed. Yaacov Ro'i (London: Frank Cass, 1995), 109.

<sup>101</sup> Luong, “Ethno-politics and Institutional Design,” 141; Collins, “Clans, Pacts, and Politics: Understanding Regime Transition in Central Asia,” 333; Vaisman, “Regionalism and Clan Loyalty in the Political Life of Uzbekistan,” 108; Carlisle, “Geopolitics and Ethnic Problems of Uzbekistan and Its Neighbors,” 78.

<b><u>NAME</u></b>	<b><u>Tenure</u></b>	<b><u>Clan</u></b>
<b>Akmal Ikramov</b>	<b>1924-37</b>	<b>Tashkent</b>
<b>Usman Yusupov</b>	<b>1937-50</b>	<b>Ferghana</b>
<b>Amin Irmatovich Niiazov</b>	<b>1950-55</b>	<b>Ferghana</b>
<b>Nuritdin Mukhitdinon</b>	<b>1955-56</b>	<b>Tashkent</b>
<b>Sabir Kamalov</b>	<b>1957-59</b>	<b>Tashkent</b>
<b>Sharif Rashidov</b>	<b>1959-83</b>	<b>Samarkand</b>
<b>Inamdzhani Usmankhodzhaev</b>	<b>1983-88</b>	<b>Ferghana</b>
<b>Rafiq Nishanov</b>	<b>1988-89</b>	<b>Tashkent</b>
<b>Islam Karimov</b>	<b>1989-91</b>	<b>Samarkand</b>

**Table 1. First Secretaries of the Communist Party of Uzbekistan.<sup>102</sup>**

As in other republics, the Brezhnev years allowed one First Secretary to hold power for a significant amount of time. In the case of the Uzbek SSR, this was Sharif Rashidov, who held the position from March 1959 to his death in October 1983. Rashidov was the leader of the Samarkand clan. He also achieved control and allegiance of other areas via the use of strategic marriages. One example is the Karakalpak Autonomous Republic where a marriage of one of his sons to the daughter of the first secretary of the Karakalpak Oblast, Kalibek Kamalov, who served in that position for twenty-one years, cemented that region's allegiance. It was after Rashidov and Brezhnev's deaths that the aforementioned anti-corruption purge broke out and a process of de-Rashidovization was attempted by Moscow. Problematically for Gorbachev, Rashidov's replacement, Inamdzhani Usmankhodzhaev, merely replaced Rashidov's Samarkand personnel with his own from the Ferghana Valley. This ultimately resulted in his removal under corruption charges and the installation of Rafiq Nishanov, who had

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<sup>102</sup> Table compiled from: Vaisman, "Regionalism and Clan Loyalty in the Political Life of Uzbekistan," 122; Luong, "Ethno-politics and Institutional Design," 142; Collins, "Clans, Pacts, and Politics: Understanding Regime Transition in Central Asia," 169.

strong party ties and weaker clan connections.<sup>103</sup> Nishanov was considered too Russified and a “slave of Moscow” by the clan elites, which coupled with Moscow’s direct appointment of approximately 1,000 mostly Russian cadre to the republic led to a series of riots to discredit him and brings us full circle to Karimov’s appointment.<sup>104</sup>

Throughout this process of turnover, balance during the Soviet period remained a key issue. Hence, a Karimov from Samarkand could rise to be the Minister of Finance under Usamankhodzhaev of Ferghana. And balance among the clans remains a salient point. Karimov must still attempt to balance out the competing interests of the clan elites.<sup>105</sup> Ilkhamov maintains that although Karimov’s administration “is a highly centralized regime, it nonetheless faces serious challenges from regional elites, particularly those dissatisfied with post-Soviet shifts in the distribution of national economic resources.”<sup>106</sup>

Reminiscent of the Soviet period, loyalty and stability are achieved by a balance of access to assets and the selective use of punishments—not through a mass democratic political process. Pushback and efforts to disperse presidential power meet Karimov’s attempts to consolidate the centralization of resource control. Parliament is one example. Although Karimov sought to consolidate his regime by minimizing clan representation in parliament through the creation of five pro-presidential parties, over half the seats continue to go to non-party affiliated elites. Furthermore, voting districts largely mirror clan territorial divisions. The primary battleground surrounds the institutions overseeing economic resources like the Ministry of Gold, Ministry of Oil and Gas, oil refineries, the Central Bank, National Bank of Uzbekistan, and the Ministry for Foreign Economic Relations. Collins believes that battles over the control of these were

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<sup>103</sup> Vaisman, “Regionalism and Clan Loyalty in the Political Life of Uzbekistan,” 112; Carlisle, “Geopolitics and Ethnic Problems of Uzbekistan and Its Neighbors,” 78-9; Collins, “Clans, Pacts, and Politics: Understanding Regime Transition in Central Asia,” 174-5; Collins, “The Logic of Clan Politics,” 240-1.

<sup>104</sup> Ibid., 241-2; Collins, “Clans, Pacts, and Politics: Understanding Regime Transition in Central Asia,” 175.

<sup>105</sup> Kangas, “Uzbekistan: Amir Timur Revisited,” 136; Collins, “Clans, Pacts, and Politics: Understanding Regime Transition in Central Asia,” 167.

<sup>106</sup> Ilkhamov, “The Limits of Centralization,” 161.

the most important political issues that confronted the Karimov regime in the 1990s. No one network could be allowed to gain too much of the pie. Additionally, maintaining balance is not to imply equality, as the clan occupying the First Secretary or President's chair receives a larger allocation than others. During this period, Samarkand elites controlled gold, oil and gas, the joint ventures, and Minister of the Interior. Tashkent ran the Central bank, most joint venture banks, and defense, while Ferghana elites dominated the National Bank of Uzbekistan and received the premiership. Others felt largely excluded. Khorezm, still under sanction for Salih's presidential run, was only awarded the Minister of Agriculture seat. Andijon and Namangan received no cabinet seats.<sup>107</sup>

Some analysts argue that Karimov benefits from the clan rivalries most of all since it allows him to play factions off of each other. Ministers are switched frequently to minimize their following and to chip away at clan power bases, minimizing the risk of defection from the informal pact and a palace coup. The two strongest clans, Samarkand and Tashkent, are balanced against each other in two of the power ministries. Tashkent controls the National Security Service (former KGB) and a Samarkand representative runs the Interior Ministry. Karimov periodically disciplines elite figures as well. As far back as 1993, he attempted to restrain the power of his own Samarkand clan, as their overreach was alienating the others. This move was resisted by Deputy Prime Minister Ismail Jurabekov, head of the Samarkand clan, who Naumkin regarded as Karimov's chief promoter, "purse," and de facto second in command. Karimov twice forced him out of government—first in 1999 and finally in 2004, under criminal charges. Samarkand suffered a further loss as Zokir Almatov, the longest serving member of the government, resigned as Interior Minister due to ill health in 2005. Tashkent also felt Karimov's touch as Defense Minister Qodir Gulomov was forced to resign and subsequently convicted of corruption, fraud, and abuse of office, while Gulomov's relative and Tashkent clan leader, Timur Alimov, was relieved of his post as presidential

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<sup>107</sup> Ilkhamov, "The Limits of Centralization," 161; Collins, "The Logic of Clan Politics," 251; Collins, "Clans, Pacts, and Politics: Understanding Regime Transition in Central Asia," 194, 334, 346-7; Collins, "Clans, Pacts, and Politics in Central Asia," 146-7; Quillen, "Democracy—A Tree Without Roots on the Steppes of Central Asia," 56; Naumkin, *Radical Islam in Central Asia*, 86.

advisor.<sup>108</sup> While some analysts believe this demonstrates that Karimov is adept and successful at ‘playing the clan politics game’, some argue that “he is playing a dangerous game, as one of these clans is likely to overthrow” him.<sup>109</sup> Former British Ambassador to Uzbekistan Craig Murray concurs that the number of people exercising power in the state is steadily shrinking. He states that “there are a lot of people who used to be in the oligarchy...There were a couple of hundred very wealthy families who really benefited from the system. That circle has got smaller and smaller and smaller as Karimov narrows it down toward his immediate family.”<sup>110</sup> This engenders speculation of a violent demise by disaffected parties. This is obviously not what Karimov has in mind for himself and it is to succession issues that this chapter now turns to.

### ***b. Succession***

As the International Crisis Group has stated, in Central Asia “succession haunts the political scene.”<sup>111</sup> Yet, succession issues in Uzbekistan remain opaque. While there are constitutional mechanisms in Uzbekistan for succession, no one has any real faith that these will be utilized. Elections as dictated in the constitution are likely to only be used to rubber stamp a preordained candidate, whether selected by Karimov or by other elite factions. Moreover, Article 96 of the constitution states, “If, for reasons of health that are confirmed by the findings of a State Medical Commission formed by Parliament, the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan is not able to meet her or his obligations, within ten days, at an emergency session of Parliament, from among the deputies, there is an election for an individual to, for up to three months, be Acting

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<sup>108</sup> Collins, “Clans, Pacts, and Politics: Understanding Regime Transition in Central Asia,” 348-9; Naumkin, *Radical Islam in Central Asia*, 85-6; Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, “Uzbekistan: Karimov Appears to Have Political Clans Firmly in Hand,” *Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty*, August 31, 2006, <http://www.rferl.org/featuresarticle/2006/08/970cdfca-adb7-4c9c-856b-526cef00273b.html> (accessed April 4, 2007); Gulnoza Saidazimova, “Uzbekistan: Islam Karimov vs. the Clans,” *Eurasianet.org*, April 23, 2005, <http://www.eurasianet.org/departments/insight/articles/pp042305.shtml> (accessed April 4, 2007); Dubnov, “Preparations for the power changes begin in Uzbekistan”; Collins, “The Logic of Clan Politics,” 253.

<sup>109</sup> Saidazimova, “Uzbekistan: Islam Karimov vs. the Clans.”

<sup>110</sup> Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, “Uzbekistan: Karimov Appears to Have Political Clans Firmly in Hand.”

<sup>111</sup> International Crisis Group, “Central Asia’s Energy Risks,” *Asia Report*, no. 133, May 24, 2007, 5.



President of the Republic of Uzbekistan. In this case, within three months, a general election for the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan must be held.”<sup>112</sup> What is lacking is a provision for an automatic transfer of power to a specific officeholder in the event of the president’s demise—parliament has up to ten days to decide on who the temporary appointee will be.<sup>113</sup> Additionally, while a number of names have surfaced as possible contenders to succeed Karimov, no clear candidate is being groomed.

Karimov has taken some steps that could be interpreted as the beginning of an exit strategy. In 2003, legislation passed that prevented former presidents from being required to testify and from search and seizure, as well as immunity from prosecution for acts done while in their official capacity. In addition, it granted the president and his family members lifetime security protection. Constitutional provisions make former presidents permanent members of the Senate and Constitutional Court. However, these should not automatically lead to a conclusion that Karimov is on his way out. Technically, his current term concluded January 22, 2007—exactly seven years from Karimov’s previous inauguration—but Uzbek law requires presidential elections to be held in December of the year the term expires, effectively extending the term by eleven months in this case. Even with that and the fact that his constitutional two term limit has long since run out, there are strong indications that Karimov has no intention of leaving office any time soon. Another referendum to extend his term or a new constitutional provision granting him the right to run for another term may be in the offing. Another option could be to restructure the government by putting current presidential powers in the office of Prime Minister and then shifting to that position. Furthermore, rumors have circulated for several years about Karimov’s supposed poor health. Yet, his activities have not decreased, leading to speculation that these rumors are a ploy to draw out potential current usurpers and future spoilers for an anointed

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<sup>112</sup> OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights, “Constitution of the Republic of Uzbekistan,” [Legislationonline.org](http://www.legislationonline.org), October 20, 2004, <http://www.legislationonline.org/legislation.php?tid=57&lid=4232> (accessed June 16, 2007); Martha Brill Olcott, “Revisiting the Twelve Myths of Central Asia,” Carnegie Endowment Working Paper, no. 23 (September 2001): footnote 14, 21.

<sup>113</sup> OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights, “Constitution of the Republic of Uzbekistan.”

replacement. Some also argue that while Karimov is making provisions to step aside in the future, it will occur only when he is convinced that some continuity of power will be in place and that neither he nor his family will be attacked. Indications are that Karimov simply does not have those guarantees at this point.<sup>114</sup>

Much speculation surrounds a dynastic succession. Karimov has two daughters, Gulnara and Lola Karimova. Little is known of Lola. She has remained out of the political spotlight other than chairing an organization sponsoring orphanages. On the other hand, speculation rages that Gulnara is Karimov's first choice as a successor. Gulnara Karimova is a graduate of the National University of Uzbekistan and Harvard University. She is extremely active in Uzbekistan's business circles with holdings in telecommunications, entertainment, tourism, and natural resources. Details of which began to surface after her divorce from Uzbek-American Mansur Maqsudi, the former head of Coca-Cola's subsidiary in Uzbekistan, in 2003. Karimova has long worked in the Uzbek government. She is currently an advisor at Uzbekistan's Moscow embassy and a leader within the Liberal Democratic Party. Karimova appears to be extremely unpopular with the general populace and seems to have embarked on a campaign to rectify this by portraying herself as a successful businesswoman rising from the bottom, poet, fashion designer, loving mother to two children, caring head of the non-governmental organization Center for Youth Initiatives, and a pop singer under the name

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<sup>114</sup> Gleason, "Red, Orange, Green, or Gray"; OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights, "Constitution of the Republic of Uzbekistan"; International Crisis Group, "Central Asia's Energy Risks," 5-6; International Crisis Group, "Uzbekistan: Europe's Sanctions Matter," Asia Briefing, no. 54, November 6, 2006, 11; Dmitry Kamtsev, "Professor Aleksei Malashenko: Gulnara Karimova is one of the preferable candidates for successor to the president of Uzbekistan," *Ferghana.ru*, June 9, 2005, <http://www.ferghana.ru/> (accessed April 6, 2007); Leena Pillai, "Uzbekistan After Karimov," Strategic Foresight Group, October 2005; Mikhail Zygar and Dmitry Butrin, "Gazprom will see to stability of the Uzbek Regime," *Ferghana.ru*, January 19, 2006, <http://enews.ferghana.ru/article.php?id=1245> (accessed April 6, 2007).

Googoosha.<sup>115</sup> As Shermatova states, “this I’m-one-of-you style has never been tried in Uzbekistan before.”<sup>116</sup> It remains to be seen if this maneuver proves successful. Some argue she may prove to be a ‘lesser of possible evils,’ who can bridge the West and Russia, while others see her chances of succeeding Karimov as minute since Gulnara has made many enemies with her business practices. Ambassador Murray maintains that Karimov is desperate for Gulnara to replace him. In order to make her more palatable to certain elite elements unsubstantiated rumors have surfaced over time of a possible arranged alliance marriage to notables such as Alisher Usmonov and Sadyk Safayev.<sup>117</sup>

Alisher Usmonov, whether in concert with Gulnara or on his own, appears to be a leading contender. Usmonov, who currently lives in Moscow, is a native of Namangan. He is a gas and steel tycoon, who is reputed to be among the wealthiest businessmen in Russia with a net worth of \$2-3 billion—Forbes ranked him the world’s 278th wealthiest person in 2006. Usmonov owns the Kommersant publishing house and serves as the Director of Gazprominvestholding, a subsidiary of Russian gas giant Gazprom. Speculation began to spread in 2005 that he was the leading candidate to replace Karimov and that Moscow was pushing this move. Many considered this a “trial balloon” to gauge systemic reactions. Others see an attempt to unite his wealth and

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<sup>115</sup> Sanobar Shermatova, “Daughter Ventures. Elections in the Post-Soviet Zone,” *Ferghana.ru*, February 25, 2005, <http://www.turkishweekly.net/comments.php?id=285> (accessed April 6, 2007); Markus, “Central Asia’s Presidential Succession Prospects”; Sanobar Shermatovaa, “The political campaign put into motion without general public being aware of its aims to secure succession of the Karimovs,” *Ferghana.ru*, April 12, 2006, <http://enews.ferghana.ru/article.php?id=1379&print=1> (accessed October 23, 2006); BBC Monitoring, “Daddy’s Little Helper,” *Transitions Online*, March 8, 2007, <http://www.tol.cz/look/TOL/article.tpl?IdLanguage=1&IdPublication=4&NrIssue=208&NrSection=4&NrArticle=18384> (accessed April 4, 2007); Andrew Strohlein, “Uzbekistan: Beyond Sanctions,” *Transitions Online*, November 22, 2006, <http://www.crisisgroup.org/home/index.cfm?id=4519&1=1> (accessed December 18, 2006); International Crisis Group, “Uzbekistan: Europe’s Sanctions Matter,” 12; International Crisis Group, “Central Asia’s Energy Risks,” 24.

<sup>116</sup> Shermatovaa, “The political campaign put into motion without general public being aware of its aims to secure succession of the Karimovs.”

<sup>117</sup> Kamtsev, “Professor Aleksei Malashenko: Gulnara Karimova is one of the preferable candidates for successor to the president of Uzbekistan”; Craig Murray, “Opposition Leader Tortured with Drugs,” October 30, 2005, [http://www.craigmurray.co.uk/archives/2005/10/opposition\\_lead\\_1.html](http://www.craigmurray.co.uk/archives/2005/10/opposition_lead_1.html) (accessed June 16, 2007); Sergei Blagov, “Safe h(e)aven for Uzbek strongman’s daughter,” *Asia Times*, September 18, 2005, [http://www.craigmurray.co.uk/archives/2005/09/safe\\_heaven\\_for.html](http://www.craigmurray.co.uk/archives/2005/09/safe_heaven_for.html) (accessed October 5, 2006) International Crisis Group, “Uzbekistan: Europe’s Sanctions Matter,” 12.

influence in Russia and Uzbekistan with Gulnara—whether by marriage or just an alliance—in the hope that it will make her a more legitimate successor.<sup>118</sup>

The current Prime Minister Shavkat Mirziyoyev is another leading candidate. Like Karimov, he is from the Samarkand clan. Mirziyoyev made his career working in the highly important and lucrative cotton sector. Prior to his appointment to the premiership, he previously served as the governor of the Jizzakh province, the home turf of Rashidov loyalists, and followed that with a stint as the governor of the Samarkand province. With strong clan ties and a strong political pedigree Mirziyoyev's positioning close to Karimov may indicate he is well placed should a succession struggle break out, but there are indications that he may prove an unpopular choice. Mirziyoyev has a reputation for unpredictable behavior and extreme brutality. He is alleged to have physically assaulted farmers who missed production quotas and to have personally beaten a rector, whose students were picking cotton too slow, to death.<sup>119</sup>

Other primary contenders include key personnel from the Tashkent clan. The National Security Service Chief Rustam Inoyatov is a long time ally of Karimov. Rustam Azimov is a Deputy Prime Minister and the Minister of Finance. Elyor Ganiyev, the current Minister of Foreign Economic Affairs, Investments, and Trade, has previously served as the Deputy Prime Minister, Deputy Head of the Presidential Cabinet, and Foreign Minister. Finally, Sadyk Safayev is currently the Chairman of the Interparliamentary Relations Committee of the Uzbek Senate. He has held the positions of Foreign Minister and Uzbek Ambassador to the United States. This slate of candidates has led some to speculate that the Tashkent clan has the inside track on replacing Karimov when the time arises. An alternate view is that there is no true front-runner and the current prominence of the Tashkent clan in Karimov's administration is only evident

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<sup>118</sup> International Crisis Group, "Central Asia's Energy Risks," 6; Stroehlein, "Uzbekistan: Beyond Sanctions"; International Crisis Group, "Uzbekistan: In for the Long Haul," Asia Briefing, no. 45, February 16, 2006, 3; International Crisis Group, "Uzbekistan: Europe's Sanctions Matter," 1, 11-2.

<sup>119</sup> International Crisis Group, "The Curse of Cotton: Central Asia's Destructive Monoculture," Asia Report, no. 93, February 28, 2005, 13; International Crisis Group, "Central Asia's Energy Risks," 6; International Crisis Group, "Uzbekistan: In for the Long Haul," 3.

of a cyclic turnover among the various groupings which prevents any one from become too threatening or simply as they fall out of favor with Karimov.<sup>120</sup>

All of this is not to say that an ‘outsider’ will not arise as Karimov did. There are many wealthy and influential individuals, organized crime elements, and Islamists who may make independent bids before Karimov departs the scene or afterward. One thing, however, is fairly constant—whoever assumes power will need to suit Uzbekistan’s clan elites.<sup>121</sup> As Kangas remarks, “practically all changes of power in the area currently constituting Uzbekistan in both the Soviet and pre-Soviet eras were due to battles among the elite, perhaps owing to regionally-based clan loyalties.”<sup>122</sup> Supporting this theory, Vaisman states that “in any event, the clan-geographical factor will influence the formation of power structures in the most important republic in former Soviet Central Asia for many years to come.”<sup>123</sup> Karimov and the clan elites are locked in a symbiotic relationship—he needs their support and they need his patronage. “The use of patronage and dependence on state resources [are] a key source of loyalty that makes any serious change very difficult under the present system.”<sup>124</sup> These interests must still be balanced and there are causes for concern. Trust between the clan networks has always been low and regime durability may decline if the size of the overall economic pie in the state shrinks and groups subsequently find themselves excluded. Ambassador Murray sees a situation evocative of Kyrgyzstan where capital is being concentrated in a shrinking number of hands close to Karimov and speculates that the “new losers” could carry out a palace coup to restore access, while Collins sees the

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<sup>120</sup> International Crisis Group, “Central Asia’s Energy Risks,” 6; Blagov, “Safe h(e)aven for Uzbek strongman’s daughter”; Pillai, “Uzbekistan after Karimov”; Dubnov, “Preparations for the power changes begin in Uzbekistan”; International Crisis Group, “Uzbekistan: Europe’s Sanctions Matter,” 11; Zygar and Butrin, “Gazprom will see to the stability of the Uzbek regime”; International Crisis Group, “Uzbekistan: In for the Long Haul,” 3.

<sup>121</sup> Kamtsev, “Professor Aleksei Malashenko: Gulnara Karimova is one of the preferable candidates for successor to the president of Uzbekistan”; International Crisis Group, “Central Asia’s Energy Risks,” 6.

<sup>122</sup> Daniel Zaretsky, “Sally N. Cummings (ed.), Power and Change in Central Asia,” *Central Eurasian Studies Review* 5, no. 1 (Winter 2006): 48.

<sup>123</sup> Vaisman, “Regionalism and Clan Loyalty in the Political Life of Uzbekistan,” 119.

<sup>124</sup> Collins, “The Logic of Clan Politics,” 253.

possibility of an “inter-clan war” at Karimov’s death if the economic balance is lost. Currently, however, it appears that the pact is holding and Karimov has the support of the key security personnel.<sup>125</sup>

## **2. Kazakhstan**

Unlike Karimov, Nursultan Nazarbayev had a more traditional political rise. He was born in Chemolgan, near present day Almaty. After completing his technical school education in the Ukraine in 1960, Nazarbayev returned to Kazakhstan to work in the Karaganda Metallurgical Combine in Termitau where he became active in politics. After stints in the Komsomol and the local communist party, Nazarbayev rose to the position of Second Secretary of the Karaganda Regional Committee in 1979, and later the Secretary for Industry of the Republic’s Central Committee. With his 1984 appointment as chairman of the Council of Ministers, Nazarbayev effectively became the number two person in the republic behind Dinmukhamed Kunaev, the First Secretary. At forty-four years of age Nazarbayev was the youngest chairman in the USSR.<sup>126</sup> Sally Cummings maintains that as “the second most prominent Kazakh in the party, Nazarbaev must have had expectations that he would be picked to replace Kunaev.”<sup>127</sup>

In 1986, at the sixteenth session of the Communist Party of Kazakhstan, he decided to take on Kunaev, when he criticized the performance of his brother Askar, the head of the Academy of Sciences. Kunaev saw this as a traitorous betrayal and sought Moscow’s approval for Nazarbayev’s removal. Nazarbayev’s supporters began a back channel campaign seeking Kunaev’s ouster. Gorbachev removed Kunaev, but did not elevate Nazarbayev. In a move to weaken the strength of the local networks that Kunaev had built up over his twenty-two years as First Secretary, Gennady Kolbin, an ethnic

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<sup>125</sup> Collins, “Clans, Pacts and Politics in Central Asia,” 145; Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, “Uzbekistan: Karimov Appears to Have Political Clans Firmly in Hand”; Collins, “The Logic of Clan Politics,” 253-4.

<sup>126</sup> Sally N. Cummings, “The Political Elite in Kazakhstan Since Independence (1991-1998): Origins, Structure and Policies” (PhD diss., University of London, 1999), 74-5; Sally N. Cummings, “Kazakhstan: An Uneasy Relationship—Power and Authority in the Nazarbaev Regime,” In *Power and Change in Central Asia*, ed. Sally N. Cummings (London & New York: Routledge, 2002), 59.

<sup>127</sup> Cummings, “The Political Elite in Kazakhstan Since Independence (1991-1998),” 75.

Russian with no clan ties was chosen instead, which set off three days of rioting in December in Alma-Ata (Almaty). Termed ethnic riots at the time, these appear, in reality, to have resulted from elite pushback against Gorbachev's fracturing of long-term power and resource balancing arrangements amongst clan elements. Ultimately Kolbin was removed in June 1989 after another series of riots in the western part of the republic. He was replaced by Nazarbayev—a compromise candidate acceptable to both Moscow and the Kazakh clan elites. He, like Karimov, was viewed as a balancer, who was not too strong personally to be a threat to the elite interest groups.<sup>128</sup>

Nazarbayev moved to consolidate his position by replacing Kolbin's cadre with his own and repairing his relationship with other key Kazakh leaders. Bringing the power structures under his control included manipulating the patronage networks built up in the state bureaucracy, military, security, and party apparatus. This manipulation of formal institutions was a tried and true method of consolidation during the Soviet era and Nazarbayev continued to follow suit. Additionally, in March 1990, Nazarbayev's chairmanship of the Supreme Soviet was converted to a presidency confirmed by a newly fashioned parliament. This was followed up with a December 1991 election victory where Nazarbayev received approximately 98 percent of the vote after his chief potential opponent Khasen Kozhakmetov, the leader of the 1986 riots and a strong nationalist, failed to gain registration when his petition signatures were mysteriously destroyed. Subsequently, political opponents were alternately bought off with positions and/or access to resources, intimidated, denied registration, pushed into exile, or prosecuted for criminal offenses, which under Kazakh law made them ineligible for future elections. From 1991-1997 Nazarbayev progressively surrounded himself with a shrinking elite

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<sup>128</sup> Cummings, "The Political Elite in Kazakhstan Since Independence (1991-1998)," 75-6; Collins, "The Logic of Clan Politics," 242; Cummings, "Kazakhstan: An Uneasy Relationship," 60; Collins, "Clans, Pacts, and Politics: Understanding Regime Transition in Central Asia," 175-6; Ahmed Rashid, "The New Struggle in Central Asia: A Primer for the Baffled," *World Policy Journal* 17, no. 4 (Winter 2000/2001): 38; Ian Bremmer and Cory Welt, "Kazakhstan's Quandary," *Journal of Democracy* 6, no. 3 (1995): 139.

made up mostly of family and friends.<sup>129</sup> “The President had by 1998 managed to amass exclusive institutional control of his administration...Informal networks, not formal structures dominate[d] Kazakhstani politics.”<sup>130</sup>

*a. Clan Politics in Kazakhstan*

Daniel Kimmage and others argue that clans continue to “play a key role in Kazakh politics.”<sup>131</sup> In Pal Kolsto’s words, “politics in Kazakhstan revolves around the bargains and maneuvers that go on among the three large subethnic groupings of Kazakhs know as ‘hordes’.”<sup>132</sup> Edward Schatz pushes this even further by stating that “kinship ties...are a silent reality that pervades everyday life.”<sup>133</sup> Historically, ethnic Kazakhs are divided into three hordes or *zhuz*, alternately referred to as Great, Middle, and Small or Elder, Middle, and Younger. Affiliation is based on patriarchal line of descent. Although Kazakhs were nomadic, Soviet policies that forced them to become sedentary, including collectivization, resulted in these three becoming associated with geographical regions. These hordes are subdivided into *rus*, which is roughly equivalent to smaller clan groupings. The Elder includes natives of the southern parts of Kazakhstan and accounts for approximately 35 percent of the population. It contains eleven subdivisions: Davlat, Adban, Suvan, Shaprashty (Chaprashti), Esti, Ochakti, Sari Vysun, Calayir, Qangli, Chachkili, and Sirgeli. The Middle contains the largest percentage of the population (40 percent) and has five divisions: Gireg, Nayman, Argin, Qipchaq, and Qonrat. It is associated with the northern section. The Younger has three sections: Elimilu (Alimoglu), Bayoli (Bayoglu), and Ceti-ru (Yedi Urug). It represents 25 percent of the population and centers on the western area of the state. For the purpose of this

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<sup>129</sup> Cummings, “The Political Elite in Kazakhstan Since Independence (1991-1998),” 74, 76-7, 92; Cummings, “Kazakhstan: An Uneasy Relationship—Power and Authority in the Nazarbaev Regime,” 65.

<sup>130</sup> Cummings, “The Political Elite in Kazakhstan Since Independence (1991-1998),” 72.

<sup>131</sup> Daniel Kimmage, “Kazakhstan: Battle of the Clans Continues,” *Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty*, August 9, 2006, <http://www.rferl.org/featuresarticleprint/2006/08/cc94ec45-a9bc-4b89-b287-bc894cdf0ca0.html> (accessed December 4, 2006).

<sup>132</sup> Pal Kolsto, “Nation-Building in the Former USSR,” *Journal of Democracy* 7, no. 1 (1996): 130.

<sup>133</sup> Edward Schatz, *Modern Clan Politics: The Power of ‘Blood’ in Kazakhstan and Beyond* (Seattle and London: University of Washington Press, 2004), xv.



thesis, Schatz's terminology of Elder, Middle, and Younger Umbrella Clan will be utilized in the discussion of Kazakh clan issues as this is the primary level of identity.<sup>134</sup>

Traditional Kazakh practices dictate that the senior leader be selected from either the Elder or Middle Umbrella Clans, while the Younger allies itself as essentially a swing vote or powerbroker with the stronger side. During the initial Soviet period, Moscow favored Middle elites. However, Stalin's later purges devastated this group and led to an alliance shift favoring the Elder. The typical arrangement was for the top five leadership positions to be allocated with two each going to the Elder and Younger, while the Middle received one. This shift also included moving the capital to Alma-Ata (Almaty) in the heart of Elder territory. Like the other Central Asian republics the Brezhnev period witnessed the accession of a long serving First Secretary in the person of Dinmukhamed Kunaev from the Elder grouping in 1964. Kunaev, who verbally stressed the importance of knowing one's lineage, carried out a Kazakhification of positions throughout the republic. The selection for these occurred along clan lines.<sup>135</sup> "Regional leaders began to dispense political and economic favor on a clan basis within their oblasts and in fact were severely chastised for these practices by authorities in Moscow."<sup>136</sup> Yet, even as these attacks on this system cycled through active to merely lip service and back, the clan networks remained strong. By the end of the Soviet period, Elder elites dominated politics, while Middle elites were preeminent in the technical professions due to their greater Russification. Younger clan elites found themselves marginalized even though a large percentage of the natural resources lay within their territory.<sup>137</sup>

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<sup>134</sup> David Isao Hoffman, "Oil and State-Building in Post-Soviet Azerbaijan and Kazakhstan" (PhD diss., University of California-Berkeley, 2000), 244, 411-2; Martha Brill Olcott, *Kazakhstan: Unfulfilled Promise* (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution Press, 2002), 184; Schatz, *Modern Clan Politics*, 30-1; Martha Brill Olcott, "Kazakhstan: Nursultan Nazarbaev as Strong President," In *Post Communist Presidents*, ed. Ray Taras (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 116; Bichel, "Contending Theories of Central Asia," 74; Edward Schatz, "The Politics of Multiple Identities: Lineage and Ethnicity in Kazakhstan," *Europe-Asia Studies* 52, no. 3 (May 2000): 489-90; Bremmer and Welt, "Kazakhstan's Quandary," 140; Luong, "Ethno-politics and Institutional Design," 93, 153; Bhavna Dave, "Politics of Language Revival: National Identity and State Building in Kazakhstan" (PhD diss., Syracuse University, 1996), 62.

<sup>135</sup> Schatz, "'Tribes' and 'Clans' in Modern Power," 98, 110-11; Hoffman, "Oil and State-Building in Post-Soviet Azerbaijan and Kazakhstan," 245.

<sup>136</sup> Luong, "Ethno-politics and Institutional Design," 153.

<sup>137</sup> Schatz, *Modern Clan Politics*, 98.

In post-Soviet Kazakhstan, clan networking remains vibrant and has played an increasingly significant function in economics and politics at all levels.<sup>138</sup> Schatz points out the “explosion of interest in genealogical knowledge, widespread celebrations of *ru* and *zhuz*-based historical figures and monuments, and a dramatic increase in private and semi-public discussion of the lineage backgrounds of others all testify to the mounting significance of these identities.”<sup>139</sup> Hoffman even more strenuously asserts this, stating that “no understanding of the Kazakhstani state is complete without understanding the intra-Kazakh political dynamic represented by the *zhus* system. Although not listed on any official biography or curriculum vitae, a Kazakh bureaucrat or politician’s tribal pedigree can broadly delineate the limits of his or her potential.”<sup>140</sup> Luong also asserts that, while Kazakhstan has the international reputation for being a highly centralized state, in reality the informal elements of society and the behind the scenes bargaining that takes place plays a major role outside of the formal institutional framework. Much as occurred in the past, the central state continues to negotiate with regional elites on economic matters.<sup>141</sup>

Nazarbayev, like Karimov, appeared to realize his need to maintain the delicate informal balance between the three umbrella clans. This was due in some measure to his personal lineage. While Nazarbayev is from the Elder Umbrella Clan like his predecessor Kunaev, he is from the Shaprashty subgrouping, a minor element in the overarching Elder framework. The Kazakhstani political elite after independence reflected the same alignment practices as the Soviet period with the top five leadership positions distributed as follows: President and Chairman of the Senate to the Elder, Prime Minister and State Secretary to the Younger, and the Chairman of the Majilis to the Middle. Sitting atop this vertically-oriented structure, President Nazarbayev appoints the regional (oblast) governors, who, in turn, make numerous appointments in their area

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<sup>138</sup> Olcott, “Kazakhstan: Nursultan Nazarbaev as Strong President,” 117; Hoffman, “Oil and State-Building in Post-Soviet Azerbaijan and Kazakhstan,” 244; Schatz, *Modern Clan Politics*, 91.

<sup>139</sup> Schatz, “The Politics of Multiple Identities,” 498-9.

<sup>140</sup> Hoffman, “Oil and State-Building in Post-Soviet Azerbaijan and Kazakhstan,” 245.

<sup>141</sup> Pauline Jones Luong, “Economic ‘Decentralization’ in Kazakhstan: Causes and Consequences,” In *The Transformation of Central Asia: States and Societies from Soviet Rule to Independence*, ed. Pauline Jones Luong (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2004), 183-4.

including city and district administrators. Nazarbayev rotates the governors frequently to prevent them from developing independent power bases via their own patronage practices. Even so, replacements almost always come from the same umbrella clan and, in general, representation in the bureaucracy emphasizes clan connections.<sup>142</sup>

Patterns of recruitment and cadre development under Nazarbayev represented “an effective blend of balancing clan interests, recognizing the need to bring in technocrats, and offering gifts to family and friends.”<sup>143</sup> Much of Nazarbayev’s strategy is seen as a continuation of Kunaev’s policies. Nurbulat Masanov claims that the decisive factor for core elite appointments is clan affiliation. Cummings’ statistics reveal that approximately 40 percent of the core elite are from the Elder clan, while 28 percent are from the Middle and 9 percent from the Younger. Elder elites typically receive positions of lower status on paper but with high influence. Middle elites received what Masanov referred to as ‘important but not overtly political’ positions, while Younger elites received low profile but high status appointments. Elder dominance at the top facilitated the consolidation of power in the hands of the presidential family, especially after foreign investment began to arrive on a large scale by the end of the 1990s.<sup>144</sup>

“If the Elder Umbrella Clan dominated at the top, patterns in the broader state apparatus were more complex.”<sup>145</sup> The Middle clan actually has a numerical superiority with 44 percent of the bureaucratic appointments. The Elder follows with 43 percent, while the Younger drastically trails with about 13 percent. Numerous factors explain this situation. First, Middle clan education levels were higher during the Soviet period. Additionally, Nazarbayev’s wife, Sara Alpysovna Nazarbayeva, hails from a

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<sup>142</sup> Schatz, “‘Tribes’ and ‘Clans’ in Modern Power,” 156-7; Hoffman, “Oil and State-Building in Post-Soviet Azerbaijan and Kazakhstan,” 245; Collins, “The Logic of Clan Politics,” 257-8; Cummings, “The Political Elite in Kazakhstan Since Independence (1991-1998),” 161-2, 178; Olcott, “Revisiting the Twelve Myths of Central Asia,” 13; Olcott, “Kazakhstan: Nursultan Nazarbaev as Strong President,” 116; Robert Cutler, “Economics and Security in Central Asia,” *Harvard Asia Quarterly* 5, no. 1 (Winter 2001), <http://www.asiaquarterly.com/content/view/90> (accessed October 3, 2006); Olcott, *Kazakhstan: Unfulfilled Promise*, 186.

<sup>143</sup> Cummings, “Kazakhstan: An Uneasy Relationship,” 66.

<sup>144</sup> Schatz, “‘Tribe’ and ‘Clans’ in Modern Power,” 162-3; Schatz, *Modern Clan Politics*, 99; Cummings, “The Political Elite in Kazakhstan Since Independence (1991-1998),” 161, 182-3.

<sup>145</sup> Schatz, *Modern Clan Politics*, 99.

prominent Middle family and their marriage resulted in key alliances between the north and south. Her locally important uncle, Syzdyk Abishev, remained close to Nazarbayev until his death in 1997. Middle elites also had bargaining power due to fears that the large Russian minority in their territory would attempt to secede; hence, the government needed their loyalty. Middle clan influence over appointments grew after the capital moved from Almaty to Astana in 1997. Finally, the influx of investment deals in Younger clan areas in the late 1990s led the regime to closely monitor its elites. As a result, all foreign investment deals had to be routed through the capital. At the same time some Younger elites were promoted to senior positions, such as Nurlan Balgimbaev, who served as Prime Minister from 1997 to 1999.<sup>146</sup> Taken as a whole, “Nazarbayev sought to foster a degree of clan balancing. Nazarbayev apparently calculated that, even as he sought to privilege his own kind and bring his family material benefit, he ought to avoid the most fundamentally destabilizing practices of clan-based patronage.”<sup>147</sup> For their part, while clan conflict over resources remained active, no one clan group sought to monopolize the state to the complete exclusion of the others.<sup>148</sup>

#### ***b. Succession***

As Ronald Grigor Suny maintains, Nursultan Nazarbayev currently “rules with little challenge in Kazakhstan.”<sup>149</sup> Parliamentary maneuverings consolidated Nazarbayev’s position even in a potential future retirement period. Laws passed in 2000 gave the ‘first president’ immunity from prosecution once he leaves office, the ability to address the legislature and the state, the ability to exert influence over the National Security Council, involvement in domestic and foreign policy decisions, and a direct

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<sup>146</sup> Schatz, *Modern Clan Politics*, 100-3; Olcott, *Kazakhstan: Unfulfilled Promise*, 185-7; Schatz, “‘Tribe’ and ‘Clans’ in Modern Power,” 164-8.

<sup>147</sup> Schatz, *Modern Clan Politics*, 111.

<sup>148</sup> *Ibid.*, 95-6.

<sup>149</sup> Ronald Grigor Suny, “Provisional Stabilities: The Politics of Identities in Post-Soviet Eurasia,” *International Security* 24, no. 3 (Winter 1999-2000): 153.

advisory role with future presidents.<sup>150</sup> Hence, the Law on the First President of Kazakhstan “ensures that Kazakhstan’s president has again used institutional resources to secure his power—even after he departs.”<sup>151</sup>

Even with these protections in place and succession speculation running rampant, Olcott’s argument that Nazarbayev has given no indication that he will step down during his lifetime appears to have a foundation. At one point the often quotable Rakhat Aliyev, a former son-in-law of Nazarbayev, even stated that monarchy would be superior to republicanism in order to maintain stability in a state still dominated by clan relations. Nazarbayev has taken steps to perpetuate his current reign. The Presidential age limit of sixty-five was removed. Additionally, 2007 parliamentary maneuverings opened the possibility of Nazarbayev serving as president for life. In May, a constitutional amendment eliminating term limits for the first president was enacted. The amendment reduced presidential terms from seven to five years starting with the 2012 elections and limits successor presidents to two terms in office, a stipulation Nazarbayev has successfully dodged since coming into power. Some analysts, like Dosym Satpaev, see this as an ‘insurance policy’ against a crisis or state instability as Nazarbayev’s time in office eventually comes to an end and as a device to give him maneuver room as he navigates the treacherous waters of deciding who his desired successor might be. Thus, the potential ‘lame duck’ dangers of a firm 2012 deadline have been avoided.<sup>152</sup>

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<sup>150</sup> Cummings, “Kazakhstan: An Uneasy Relationship—Power and Authority in the Nazarbaev Regime,” 65; McGlinchey, “In for Life,” 3.

<sup>151</sup> Cummings, “Kazakhstan: An Uneasy Relationship—Power and Authority in the Nazarbaev Regime,” 65.

<sup>152</sup> Martha Brill Olcott, *Central Asia’s Second Chance* (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution Press, 2005), 34; Igor Yavlyansky, “Nazarbayev’s son-in-law Rahat Aliyev maintains that monarchy is the best possible arrangement for Kazakhstan,” *Ferghana.ru*, September 4, 2006, <http://www.ferghana.ru> (accessed April 6, 2007); Cummings, “The Political Elite in Kazakhstan Since Independence (1991-1998),” 98; Ariel Cohen, “Kazakhstan: President Nazarbayev Makes a Power Play,” *Eurasianet.org*, May 31, 2007, <http://www.eurasianet.org/departments/insight/articles/eav053107/shtml> (accessed June 6, 2007); Marat Yermukanov, “Nazarbayev Gets Parliamentary Backing to Perpetuate His Rule,” *Eurasia Daily Monitor* 4, no. 99 (May 21, 2007), <http://www.jamestown.org/edm> (accessed May 21, 2007); Institute for War & Peace Reporting, “Nazarbaev Could be President for Life,” *Institute for War & Peace Reporting*, May 22, 2007, <http://www.iwpr.net/?s=b&p=bkz&o=335750&l=EN> (accessed May 29, 2007); Olga Oliker, “Kazakhstan’s Security Interests and Their Implications for the U.S.-Kazakh Relationship,” *China and Eurasia Forum Quarterly* 5, no. 2 (2007): 65.

Speculation endures that, in the end, Nazarbayev will attempt a dynastic succession to one of his progeny or sons-in-law. He has no sons, but does have three daughters, Dariga, Dinara, and Aliya. Only Dariga Nazarbayeva, an adoptive daughter born to his wife before they met, has shown political ambitions. Analysts credit her with intuitive political skill and a good public persona. Some believe she is figure who could successfully bridge the state's elite networks. Additionally, Dariga portrays herself as a candidate acceptable to both the establishment and the moderate opposition. Her portfolio includes a vast media empire that contains most 'independent' outlets, such as Khabar, the largest television station, a seat in parliament, and the founding a political party (Asar). In a December 2005 press conference, Dariga hinted she might seek the presidency in 2012, but also indicated Nazarbayev would have the final say in choosing his successor. Many have long believed she had the inside track, but this appears debatable. Kazakhstan has no history of female rulers. Furthermore, Dariga's case is hurt by not being Nazarbayev's biological offspring and by having no experience or control in the important natural resource sector. Asar's weak showing in the 2004 elections and its subsequent absorption into Nazarbayev's Nur-Otan Party lead some to believe that his backing may be lukewarm. Asar's dissolution deprived her of a natural springboard into power. Some now argue that a falling out occurred between Dariga and the president and that her position has waned relative to the person considered her chief political rival, Timur Kulibayev. This is especially the case after criminal charges were brought against her now ex-husband, Rakhat Aliyev. Compounding this impression was her removal from her position as Nur Otan's deputy chairman and from the party's list of eligible candidates for Kazakhstan's August 2007 parliamentary elections.<sup>153</sup>

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<sup>153</sup> Martha Brill Olcott, "The War on Terrorism in Central Asia and the Cause of Democratic Reform," *Democratizatsiya* 11, no. 1 (Winter 2003): 93; Olcott, *Central Asia's Second Chance*, 34, 147; Economist Intelligence Unit, "Country Report Kazakhstan," The Economist Unit Limited, April 2006, [http://store.eiu.com/index.asp?layout=show\\_sample&product\\_id=50000205&country\\_id=KZ](http://store.eiu.com/index.asp?layout=show_sample&product_id=50000205&country_id=KZ) (accessed October 5, 2006); Cummings, "The Political Elite in Kazakhstan Since Independence (1991-1998)," 92; Olcott, *Kazakhstan: Unfulfilled Promise*, 228; Daniel Kimmage, "Kazakhstan: A Shaken System," *Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty*, March 3, 2006, <http://www.rferl.org/featuresarticle/2006/03/db5b3199-34bd-4d3e-bd3f-8b74fc42000f.html> (accessed May 31, 2007); Bruce Pannier, "Kazakhstan: Presidential Son-In-Law's New Role Highlights Energy Politics," *Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty*, June 27, 2006, <http://www.rferl.org/featuresarticle/2006/06/1e152f7d-a975-4572-9d89-eea4b036863c.html> (accessed June 8, 2007); International Crisis Group, "Central Asia's Energy Risks," 4; Markus, "Central Asia's Presidential Succession Prospects"; Hoffman, "Oil and State-Building in Post-Soviet Azerbaijan and

Although his fortunes have waxed and waned over the years, until mid-2007, Rakhat Aliyev was viewed as a leading contender to succeed Nazarbayev. His positioning was not hurt by his marriage to Dariga and that he is the father of three presidential grandchildren. Aliyev is a trained surgeon, who has served in a number of government posts, including membership on the Security Council, head of the Tax Inspectorate, deputy chief of the state security service, deputy chief of the presidential security detail, deputy foreign minister, and Ambassador to Austria. He was also Kazakhstan's special representative to the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe. Aliyev has numerous lucrative financial holdings. His penchant for aggressive business practices made him many enemies and served as the excuse for what may prove to be his ultimate downfall. Previous asset grabs against other elites had resulted in their breaking away from Nazarbayev and creating the Democratic Choice party and in Aliyev's first exile as Ambassador to Austria. His second occurred in February 2007, after allegations surfaced that he kidnapped executives from Nurbank—a company Aliyev had a controlling interest in—to force them to turn over their shares of a lucrative business based in Almaty. Nazarbayev stripped him of all state titles and issued a warrant for his arrest in May. For his part, Aliyev contends this is an orchestrated attempt to prevent him from running for president in 2012. He claims to have informed

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Kazakhstan,” 240-1; Collins, “The Logic of Clan Politics,” 258; Olcott, “Revisiting the Twelve Myths of Central Asia,” 11; Cummings, “Kazakhstan: An Uneasy Relationship,” 65; Central Asia-Caucasus Analyst, “Kazkh President's Daughter Addresses Succession Issue,” *Central Asia-Caucasus Analyst*, December 6, 2005, [http://www.cacianalyst.org/view\\_article.php?articleid=3907](http://www.cacianalyst.org/view_article.php?articleid=3907) (accessed October 5, 2006); Kimmage, “Kazakhstan: Battle of the Clans Continues”; Martha Brill Olcott, “Kazakhstan ‘Democracy’ is Spelled Dynasty,” *Newsday*, July 14, 2002, <http://www.carnegieendowment.org/publications/index.cfm?fa-view&id=1025&prog=zru> (accessed October 4, 2006); Bruce Pannier, “Kazakhstan: Nazarbaeva Bids to Unite Pro-Presidential Forces,” *Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty*, June 21, 2006, <http://www.rferl.org/featuresarticle/2006/06/1a688624-452a-4ddc-835e-fabf08deb0f7.html> (accessed May 31, 2007); Aldar Kusainov, “Wheels Set in Motion for Dynastic Transition in Kazakhstan,” *Eurasianet.org*, September 16, 2003, <http://www.eurasianet.org/departments/insight/articles/eav091603.shtml> (accessed April 4, 2007); Jean-Christophe Peuch, “Kazakhstan: Trouble Withing the First Family,” *Eurasianet.org*, May 29, 2007, <http://www.eurasianet.org/departments/insight/articles/eav052907.shtml> (accessed June 6, 2007); Douglas Frantz, “Fresh Dynasties Sprout in Post-Soviet Lands,” *New York Times*, February 20, 2001, [http://eurasia.org.ru/archive/2001/press\\_en/02\\_20\\_Freshdynasties\\_eng.htm](http://eurasia.org.ru/archive/2001/press_en/02_20_Freshdynasties_eng.htm) (assessed October 5, 2006); Global Insight, “Questions Linger as Kazakh Court Convicts All 10 Defendants for Opposition Leader's Murder,” *Same Day Analysis*, <http://www.globalinsight.com/SDA/SDADetail6811.htm> (accessed October 5, 2006); Dmitrii Furman, “The Regime in Kazakhstan,” In *Central Asia at the End of the Transition*, ed. Boris Rumer (London & New York: M.E. Sharpe, 2005), 238; Marat Yermukanov, “Pro-Presidential Party Dominates Election Campaign in Kazakhstan,” *Eurasia Daily Monitor* 4, no. 137 (July 16, 2007), <http://www.jamestown.org/edm/> (accessed July 16, 2007).

Nazarbayev of his intentions shortly before being ordered to Austria. Aliyev had recently condemned the amendment removing Nazarbayev's term limitations. Some contend this situation indicates an ongoing struggle within the elite structure and that, for now, he has lost. Others argue that Nazarbayev is moving to neutralize Dariga and Aliyev's growing influence because they were becoming too independent from him. Whatever the case, this situation potentially damaged Dariga's bid for power and she divorced Aliyev in June. This move is seen as effectively locking Aliyev out of any future political power in Kazakhstan. Additionally, reformers view him as a corrupt manifestation of the Nazarbayev regime and are unlikely to embrace his new persona as a reformer.<sup>154</sup>

Timur Kulibayev, who is married to Nazarbayev's daughter Dinara, is a clear beneficiary of Dariga and Aliyev's slide. He is the son of a former regional communist first secretary in the oil and natural gas rich western province of Atyrau, which borders the Caspian Sea and contains Kazakhstan's main harbor. Kulibayev's extensive commercial holdings are concentrated in oil and natural gas, but also include banking enterprises like a controlling stake in Halyk Bank, the state's third largest, and

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<sup>154</sup> Cummings, "The Political Elite in Kazakhstan Since Independence (1991-1998)," 92; Kimmage, "Battle of the Clans Continues"; Olcott, *Kazakhstan, Unfulfilled Promise*, 228; Olcott, "The War on Terrorism in Central Asia and the Cause of Democratic Reform," 92; Yavlyansky, "Nazarbayev's son-in-law Rahat Aliyev maintains that monarchy is the best possible arrangement for Kazakhstan"; Collins, "The Logic of Clan Politics," 258; Olcott, *Central Asia's Second Chance*, 147; Bruce Pannier, "Kazakhstan: Arrest of Presidential Son-In-Law Could Open Pandora's Box," *Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty*, June 7, 2007, <http://www.rferl.org/featuresarticle/2007/06/d76d68e8-e98a-46e9-8b78-ff965662ec39.html> (accessed June 7, 2007); Kimmage, "Kazakhstan: A Shaken System"; Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, "Kazakh President's Daughter Divorces Fugitive Husband," *Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty*, June 12, 2007, <http://www.rferl.org/featuresarticleprint/2007/06/d8157232-064b-4644-b52e-37dcf856c29e.html> (accessed June 13, 2007); Pannier, "Kazakhstan: Presidential Son-In-Law's New Role Highlights Energy Politics"; Joanna Lillis, "Kazakhstan: The Domestic Implications of Rakhat Aliyev's Precipitous Fall," *Eurasianet.org*, June 13, 2007, <http://www.eurasianet.org/departments/insight/articles/eav061307.shtml> (accessed June 15, 2007); Peuch, "Kazakhstan: Trouble Within the First Family"; Farangis Najibullah, "Kazakhstan: Critics Question Presidential Son-In-Law's Volte-Face," *Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty*, May 28, 2007, <http://www.rferl.org/featuresarticle/2007/05/8cfb319f-d62e-4126-85ac-6e982acbd5c8.html> (accessed June 7, 2006); Kusainov, "Wheels Set in Motion for Dynastic Transition in Kazakhstan"; International Herald Tribune, "Son-In-Law of Kazakh President is Arrested in Vienna," *International Herald Tribune*, June 1, 2007, <http://www.iht.com/articles/2007/06/01/asia/kazakh.php> (accessed June 6, 2007); Joanna Lillis, "Kazakhstan: Political Reshuffle Involves President's Son-In-Law," *Eurasianet.org*, February 9, 2007, <http://www.eurasianet.org/departments/insight/articles/eav020907.shtml> (accessed March 1, 2007); Frantz, "Fresh Dynasties Sprout in Post-Soviet Lands"; Daur Dosybiev, "Spectacular Fall From Grace for Kazak President's Son-In-Law," *Institute for War & Peace Reporting*, Reporting Central Asia No. 495, June 2, 2007, [http://iwpr.net/?p=rca&s=f&o=336024&apc\\_state=henprca](http://iwpr.net/?p=rca&s=f&o=336024&apc_state=henprca) (accessed June 6, 2007); Markus, "Central Asia's Presidential Succession Prospects"; Cummings, "Kazakhstan: An Uneasy Relationship," 65; International Crisis Group, "Central Asia's Energy Risks," 4.



Kazkommertsbank. Many of his business interests supposedly overlap with the president's. He currently serves as the Chairman of the Board of KazMunaiGaz, a state run oil and gas company. Previous postings include the presidency of TransNefteGaz, which is responsible for the transport of all Kazakh oil and natural gas, the vice presidency of Kazakh Oil, the national oil company that replaced the Ministry of Oil and Gas in 1997, and leadership of KazTransOil, the national pipeline company. Unlike Aliyev, Kulibayev is said to possess a pleasant demeanor and has won far fewer enemies during his rise. Numerous analysts now cite Kulibayev as the leading candidate for succession and believe Nazarbayev will increasingly be seen promoting his position. His wide-ranging experience in Kazakhstan's energy sector could serve him well in a presidential posting. One major drawback for him is a lack of control in any media outlets. Some view his rise as a potential fulfillment of the traditional alliance between the Elder and Younger clans given his marriage to Dinara, but in this case a member of the Younger would occupy the senior post. While his star may be on the rise, it remains to be seen if this bears fruit as others have risen only to be pushed out by Nazarbayev when he perceived they had gotten strong enough to become a danger to him.<sup>155</sup>

A recent addition to this milieu is Kairat Saltybaldy, the son of Nazarbayev's younger brother. Born in 1970, he has worked as deputy head of Astana, first vice president of KazakhOil, and as deputy head of the anti-corruption division of the National Security Committee (KNB). It is asserted his primary purpose there was to protect Nazarbayev's family interests.<sup>156</sup> His selection over a son-in-law "would be closest to traditional Kazakh dynastic practice."<sup>157</sup> Other potential candidates wait in the wings. Former Prime Minister and president of KazakhOil, Nurlan Balgimbayev

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<sup>155</sup> Cummings, "The Political Elite in Kazakhstan Since Independence (1991-1998)," 92; Kimmage, "Battle of the Clans Continues"; Olcott, *Kazakhstan, Unfulfilled Promise*, 228; Olcott, *Central Asia's Second Chance*, 147; Cumming, "Kazakhstan: An Uneasy Relationship," 65; Global Insight, "Questions Linger as Kazakh Court Convicts all 10 Defendants for Opposition Leader's Murder"; Hoffman, "Oil and State-Building in Post-Soviet Azerbaijan and Kazakhstan," 240; Furman, "The Regime in Kazakhstan," 238-9; Olcott, "Kazakhstan 'Democracy' is Spelled Dynasty"; Pannier, "Kazakhstan: Presidential Son-In-Law's New Role Highlights Energy Politics"; Kimmage, "Kazakhstan: A Shaken System"; Lillis, "Kazakhstan: The Domestic Implications of Rakhat Aliyev's Precipitous Fall"; International Crisis Group, "Central Asia's Energy Risks," 4; Collins, "The Logic of Clan Politics," 258.

<sup>156</sup> Olcott, *Kazakhstan: Unfulfilled Promise*, 188.

<sup>157</sup> Olcott, "Revisiting the Twelve Myths of Central Asia," 11.

currently serves as the president of the Kazakhstan Oil Investment Company. Descending from the Younger clan, he has extensive Russian ties, something likely to pay dividends in any succession struggle, and has built ties with younger members of the natural resource elite. Almaty Mayor Imangali Tasmagambetov, a long-time Aliyev opponent, is likely to jockey for position should the situation arise. While not candidates themselves, notable magnates like Alexander Mashkevich, Nurtai Abykayev, Bulat Utemuratov, Patokh Shodiev, Alidzhon Ibragimov, and Nurzhan Subkhanberdin will definitely be involved.<sup>158</sup> As Dmitrii Furman put it, “they could play a decisive role in the inheritance struggle by allying with a Family candidate or even by supporting someone from outside the Family.”<sup>159</sup> Nazarbayev could also be looking in the ‘second tier’ of prospects for a successor since this person would owe his position solely to him. The ultimate winner may not even be on the scene yet and could arise over the next few years.<sup>160</sup> It is almost like Dariga Nazarbayeva was preparing the world for this when she stated that “we may not see this politician yet. But we’ve seen the Russian experience, where [President] Vladimir Putin was unexpectedly thrust onto the political stage.”<sup>161</sup>

As Daniel Kimmage writes, in Kazakhstan “‘the political struggle between [influence groups] takes place not for the electorate, but for influence over the head of state.’ One consequence of this is that ‘shadow politics predominates over public politics’...The president, then, is both a player and a referee, and while he can stretch, suspend, and break the rules of the game, he cannot change them permanently. His power is vast, but it is limited by the need to maneuver between influence groups and maintain a balance between them.”<sup>162</sup> Nazarbayev has a strong hold on power, probably the strongest since independence, and may prove capable of anointing a successor and having that individual confirmed by the Kazakhstani state. One thing is certain, either

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<sup>158</sup> Furman, “The Regime in Kazakhstan,” 239; Lillis, “Kazakhstan: The Domestic Implications of Rakhat Aliyev’s Precipitous Fall”; Kimmage, “Kazakhstan: A Shaken System”; Olcott, *Kazakhstan: Unfulfilled Promise*, 186, 229.

<sup>159</sup> Furman, “The Regime in Kazakhstan,” 239.

<sup>160</sup> Kimmage, “Kazakhstan: A Shaken System”; Olcott, *Central Asia’s Second Chance*, 147.

<sup>161</sup> Central Asia-Caucasus Analyst, “Kazakh President’s Daughter Addresses Succession Issue.”

<sup>162</sup> Kimmage, “Kazakhstan: A Shaken System.”

before or after Nazarbayev's death there will be a successor and there is no clear heir. The outcome will depend on who is selected and whether or not key clan elites back the decision.<sup>163</sup> With that in mind, the Economist Intelligence Unit predicts that Kazakhstan's "political outlook will be marred by tension over the coming years, as various factions seek to strengthen their position in the event of a leadership struggle."<sup>164</sup> Much as in Uzbekistan, analysts view constitutional provisions with a jaundiced eye. Constitutionally mandated elections would likely serve only as a device to legitimize a pre-selected successor. And, while Article 48 of the constitution stipulates that in the event of a sitting president's death the Chairperson of the Senate—currently Kassym-Jomart Tokayev—would serve out the remainder of the term, the world saw a similar provision ignored in Turkmenistan to facilitate the installation of the clan elite preference.<sup>165</sup> Hence, we are left with the old phrase that the succession struggle will be played out like 'bulldogs fighting under a rug.' Occasionally, as has been the case recently, someone lifts up the corner to give the world a peek, but by and large it will be a nontransparent process that most will only see the results of when it is over.<sup>166</sup>

## E. CONCLUSION

Power transition in Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan remains an uncertain topic. Based on the literature, one thing is certain; clans will play a role in any succession scenario that unfolds in Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan, just as they did toward the end of the Soviet Union. In the post-Soviet period there has essentially been an authoritarian consolidation rooted in the neopatrimonial tendencies of the presidents, as well as the underlying clan politics. Of note, in the process of attempting to reap all they can for their respective followers, the participants have generated a degree of relative differentiation among the clans where the president and his closest associates are seen as reaping a

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<sup>163</sup> Olcott, *Kazakhstan: Unfulfilled Promise*, 228.

<sup>164</sup> Economist Intelligence Unit, "Country Report Kazakhstan."

<sup>165</sup> Embassy of the Republic of Kazakhstan, "The Constitution of the Republic of Kazakhstan," <http://www.kazakhstanembassy.org.uk/cgi-bin/index/225> (accessed July 6, 2007); Kusainov, "Wheels Set in Motion for Dynastic Transition in Kazakhstan."

<sup>166</sup> I wish to relay my thanks to Professor Mikhail Tsygkin for familiarizing me with this phrase used by Winston Churchill to describe competition in the Kremlin. Schatz, *Modern Clan Politics*, 95.

disproportionate amount of the state's resources. This has left some clans viewing themselves as comparatively deprived, but unwilling to risk what they have in hand by taking on the presidents in too overt a manner. In this situation, the succession question takes on grand proportions. Whoever places their representative in the position of president, when the opportunity arises, will gain access to the lion's share of the state's resources for their patronage base. This virtually ensures a behind-the-scenes struggle among clan leaders that will likely exclude any opposition figures.<sup>167</sup>

This has the potential to further radicalize the opposition due to the lack of any outlet for protest and as Sally Cummings states, potentially "sows the seeds of its own demise."<sup>168</sup> Some analysts believe that if conflict breaks out in a succession struggle, it will be extended, given the clans ability to mobilize followers, and violent, "driven by the norms of avenging kin."<sup>169</sup> This possibility led Collins to conclude that "perhaps the greatest threat Central Asians face is not the democracy deficit with which they must live, but the threat they face from regime instability and state breakdown."<sup>170</sup>

Yet, there is a decidedly conservative streak inherent in both the intentions of the neopatrimonial regimes in question and the clan politics that surrounds them, which likely mitigates that potential for breakdown. Collins sums this by stating, "The highly practical nature of clan interaction and goal attainment indicates a greater likelihood that clan elites will arrive at agreements on the division of state resources, since, unlike ethnic, religious or other ideological identity groups, clans are not pursuing essentialist visions of the state. In this sense, clans are less likely to be susceptible to or driven by the exclusivist perceptions and agendas of the identity-based political movements increasingly common in the post-Cold War world."<sup>171</sup>

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<sup>167</sup> Katz, "Revolutionary Change in Central Asia," 159; Katz, "Policy Watch: C. Asian Strongmen Weak?"; Abazov, "Kyrgyzstan"; Collins, "The Political Role of Clans in Central Asia," 171-2, 184; Collins, "Clans, Pacts, and Politics in Central Asia," 145-6, 148, 151.

<sup>168</sup> Cummings, "Introduction: Power and Change in Central Asia," 20.

<sup>169</sup> Collins, "The Political Role of Clans in Central Asia," 185.

<sup>170</sup> Collins, "Clans, Pacts, and Politics in Central Asia," 148.

<sup>171</sup> Collins, "Clans, Pacts, and Politics: Understanding Regime Transition in Central Asia," 135.

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### **III. EXAMINATION OF POSSIBLE TRAJECTORIES**

#### **A. INTRODUCTION**

The evidence examined thus far reveals the conservative status quo tendencies related to the succession issue present in both regime intentions and the elite clan politics that plays out in each state. The final lens to be employed in this study is Richard Snyder's theory on the trajectories of neopatrimonial regimes. The discussion of his work will be supplemented by other authors in the transitions genre. Snyder posits four potential paths for neopatrimonial regimes: 1) revolution, 2) military rule (coup), 3) nonrevolutionary transition to civilian rule (democracy), and 4) ongoing regime stability. These headings yield eight possible trajectories (see Figure 3). Snyder's work highlights the regime's relationship with the military, the strength of moderate regime opposition elements, and the strength of the radical/revolutionary opposition present in a country. The interrelationship of these determines the most likely trajectory. The issue at hand is to determine if the current ground truth in each of these states supports the conservative intentions previously revealed or if those conservative tendencies are juxtaposed against a more radical backdrop.<sup>172</sup>

#### **B. GENERAL DISCUSSION OF NEOPATRIMONIAL TRAJECTORIES**

Neopatrimonial regimes rest on the executive's ability to maintain an extensive patronage network, not an ideology or a legal constitutional framework. "[The] degree to which the patronage network radiating from the ruler penetrates state institutions, especially the military, tends to be uneven and to fluctuate over time."<sup>173</sup> Power struggles often lie beneath the surface. As a result, the relative positioning of elites and their followers adjusts over time and can range from "thorough cooptation by patronage resources to denial of such resources altogether."<sup>174</sup> Hence, Snyder rests his theoretical

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<sup>172</sup> Snyder, "Explaining Transitions from Neopatrimonial Dictatorships," 379.

<sup>173</sup> Ibid.

<sup>174</sup> Ibid.

underpinnings for the trajectories that neopatrimonial regimes can follow on the changes in the executive's relationship with various factions in the patronage network. To construct his framework, Snyder selected three variables to account for these trajectories. These are the institutional autonomy of the military, the strength of moderate opposition groups, and the strength of revolutionary groups. Three important relationships affecting these variables in Snyder's thinking are the relationship between the neopatrimonial leader to the military, between the leader and domestic elites, and between all the domestic actors—regime, military, and opposition groups—and foreign actors.<sup>175</sup>

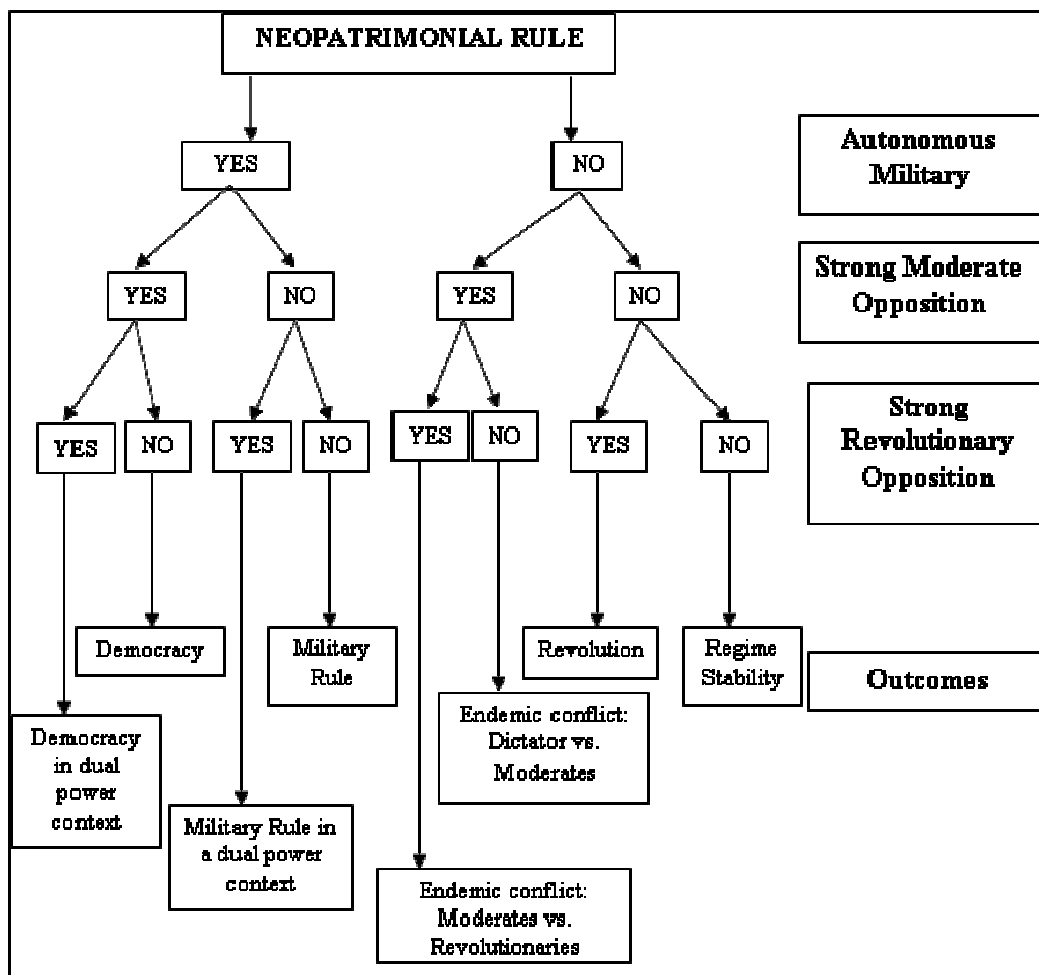


Figure 3. Snyder's Political Trajectories of Neopatrimonial Regimes.<sup>176</sup>

<sup>175</sup> Snyder, "Explaining Transitions from Neopatrimonial Dictatorships," 379-80.

<sup>176</sup> Ibid., 382.

## 1. Institutional Military Factors

Understanding the military's status is particularly important to differentiate between revolutionary and nonrevolutionary outcomes. The degree to which the executive dilutes its autonomy of action and dominates it dictates the outcome path. Autonomy is diluted by controlling the military's hierarchy and placing loyalty above competence in promotion decisions. In cases where key sectors of the armed forces are not incorporated into the patronage base, military leaders may come to view the chief executive as threatening to their interests, and if they are capable of independent action, a coup may overthrow the regime. Military actors can also assist in the regime's demise by simply withholding support at a key juncture, removing a major section of the blanket of protection that regimes cloak themselves with. If no segment of the armed forces is capable of autonomous action, then any change tends to be revolutionary in nature. Snyder identifies six questions to examine to determine the degree of military autonomy. What level of control over the supply of their equipment do they have? Do predictable career paths for officers exist or is promotion based on loyalty? Can officers voice discontent to each other? Is the officer corps divided on ethnic or regional lines? What capacity does the chief executive have to purge elements whose loyalty he doubts? Does the leader have a separate paramilitary force he can use to counterbalance the regular military and whose members he uses to spy on the regular armed forces?<sup>177</sup>

In neopatrimonial states, the armed forces tend to resemble a "praetorian guard" of the chief executive.<sup>178</sup> Characterized by low professionalism, the benefit of a career have little relation to the salary and benefits accorded the position and more to do with the 'extra economic opportunities' delivered by the patronage network or extractions from the populace. According to Guillermo O'Donnell and Philippe Schmitter, states

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<sup>177</sup> Snyder, "Explaining Transitions from Neopatrimonial Dictatorships," 380-1; Alfred Stepan, "Paths toward Redemocratization: Theoretical and Comparative Considerations," In *Transitions from Authoritarian Rule: Prospects for Democracy*, eds. Guillermo O'Donnell, Philippe Schmitter, and Laurence Whitehead (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1986), 73; Gretchen Casper and Michelle M. Taylor, *Negotiating Democracy: Transitions from Authoritarian Rule* (Pittsburgh, PA: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1996), 7.

<sup>178</sup> Guillermo O'Donnell and Philippe C. Schmitter, *Transitions from Authoritarian Rule: Tentative Conclusions About Uncertain Democracies* (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1986), 32.



embodied by this model have little opportunity to develop a loyal opposition or a competitive political process. Under these circumstances, armed revolution is their anticipated fashion of regime change and the source of any hope for eventual democratization. In contrast, states that have professionalized militaries, especially when coupled with a strong middle class, have low success rates for revolutions. The path to democracy will likely be of a negotiated or ‘pacted’ nature.<sup>179</sup>

## **2. Opposition & Transition Factors**

Patronage networks by their nature favor some groups over others even if only in the relative degree of access to public resources and economic opportunities. Snyder maintains that neopatrimonial leaders encourage or discourage the creation of moderate and revolutionary opposition by how they manage this process. When patronage is limited to a small clique and elites are excluded from political influence and economic largesse, broad revolutionary coalitions tend to form. When this is coupled with a military incapable of autonomous action, moderates tend to ally with revolutionaries. This solidarity can be preempted if the regime successfully manipulates opponents with selective access to resources. This damages the development of a strong civil society. Yet, even exclusionary regimes are not always overthrown by revolutions since strong state repression can prevent the formation of effective resistance movements.<sup>180</sup>

Foreign entities can strengthen domestic actors—regime or opposition—through their actions or inactions. Robust external support for an incumbent permits the regime to ignore calls for reforms by allowing it to isolate itself from the populace. Conversely, overdependence on a patron contributes to successful revolutions by destroying the leaders credibility (becomes viewed as a puppet) or by creating untenable situations via demands on the regime that harm its ability to maintain domestic control. External actors can also undermine the regime by switching support to opposition figures more to its liking during a crisis period. Thus, history shows it is in the best interest of neopatrimonial leaders to diversify their support base among multiple patrons. Overall,

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<sup>179</sup> O'Donnell and Schmitter, *Transitions from Authoritarian Rule*, 32-4.

<sup>180</sup> Snyder, “Explaining Transitions from Neopatrimonial Dictatorships,” 383-4.

however, the literature consistently states that external forces play a secondary role in this drama; internal actors will determine the courses chosen and the ultimate outcomes. The major exception is dominance after a wartime victory by an external power.<sup>181</sup> Under peacetime scenarios, “unobtrusive but inflexible inducements and penalties are likely to be more effective than more fleetingly dramatic approaches, but even the most effective methods will only produce results over the long haul,” and this only when the internal dynamics of the state are ripe for it.<sup>182</sup>

*a. Democratic Transitions*

There is an innate difficulty in transitioning from neopatrimonialism to democracy. Incumbents and other elites are reluctant to relinquish their power in the absence of a struggle. As a result, change tends to be forced, “either revolution or military coup, a fact that also inhibits immediate democratization.”<sup>183</sup> David Brooker’s work on the first presidents of the Soviet successor states supports this. He stated that “the manner in which a leader approached the prospect of leaving power has implications for a country’s democratic development because it is at the heart of the process of establishing the ‘rules of the game’ for a political system—creating norms and expectations for future leaders.”<sup>184</sup>

Accordingly, Gretchen Casper and Michelle Taylor view the path to democracy as one of compromise when the preferences of the actors involved are converging, when the populace and the regime both perceive the cues that the status quo cannot continue or both have come to support democracy, and when the incumbent is able to constrain how change is implemented. This occurs when the autocrat determines

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<sup>181</sup> Snyder, “Explaining Transitions from Neopatrimonial Dictatorships,” 384-5, 393-4; O’Donnell and Schmitter, *Transitions from Authoritarian Rule*, ix, 18; Laurence Whitehead, “International Aspects of Democratization,” In *Transitions from Authoritarian Rule: Prospects for Democracy*, eds. Guillermo O’Donnell, Philippe C. Schmitter, and Laurence Whitehead (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1986), 4.

<sup>182</sup> Ibid., 21.

<sup>183</sup> Snyder, “Explaining Transitions from Neopatrimonial Dictatorships,” footnote 81, 399.

<sup>184</sup> David C. Brooker, “How They Leave: A Comparison of How the First Presidents of the Soviet Successor States Left Office,” *Journal of Communist Studies and Transition Politics* 20, no. 4 (December 2004): 61.

it is in his best interest to exit the stage with a warranty that significant continued influence will be retained—a ‘pacted’ democratic arrangement. A key component is that no actor has the capacity to force the others to capitulate. The option of having some continued influence becomes more palatable than facing the possibility of a complete loss. This may have a great deal to do with the regime’s uncertainty over continued support from the security services or key elites. Consequently, the suppressive violence may not remain an instrument in their toolkit. Cues for readiness to pursue this path may be found in studying the amount of force, or the lack thereof, that a regime uses in response to protests and strikes.<sup>185</sup>

Authoritarianism’s survival in the face of a democratic opposition is most likely when there are no converging preferences to build a pact on. The regime ignores the signals for change from the populace and takes every measure to prevent it. This coincides with a belief that it possesses sufficient support from the security services and societal elites to be able to maintain power in this high stakes confrontation.<sup>186</sup> As a result, the regime will seek to reinforce the perception that it will strike against its opponents and to raise “the cost to the mass public of demonstrating its preferences.”<sup>187</sup> In this situation democratic actors are typically forced to relent, as the cost just gets too inflated for the populace to pay. In this regard, the incumbent will do what is necessary to buttress its position irrespective of international opinion.<sup>188</sup>

Additionally, there is a distinction between real moves toward democracy and maneuvers to shore up regime strength by liberalizing. The two are not synonymous. Liberalizing may be used to answer international or domestic pressures with by giving the appearance of reform progress. These moves are joined to claims that going any further would destabilize the state or empower some ‘enemy’ as their citizenry is not yet ‘ready’ to handle more. Liberalization can have unexpected consequences. It lowers the perceived cost of dissent and, as individuals act in ways that were previously taboo,

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<sup>185</sup> Casper and Taylor, *Negotiating Democracy*, 95, 113-4.

<sup>186</sup> Ibid., 57, 59-60, 75-6, 81-2.

<sup>187</sup> Ibid., 60.

<sup>188</sup> Casper and Taylor, *Negotiating Democracy*, 91-2.

others feel free to do the same. The regime views these new rights are not irreversible and, if the situation appears to warrant their action, they believe opponents, who cross the line, can be repressed. Nonetheless, liberalizing actions have a cumulative affect over time. As they become in effect institutionalized, the cost of rollbacks rises, while it becomes more difficult to justify withholding other rights.<sup>189</sup> While the regime's goal was a "liberalized authoritarianism" without competitive elections or accountability, the process of starting liberalization may increase the outcry for greater democratization.<sup>190</sup> Secular or religious groups rise to fill the previously vacant political spaces and to test the new boundaries. "Regimes quickly discover that the so-called peace and consensus were, at best, part of an imposed armistice."<sup>191</sup> There is no predetermined outcome for this awakened civil society. Revolution, democratization, or regime crackdown are all still possible; however, Schmitter and O'Donnell maintain that in all the cases they examined where an authoritarian regime transitioned to full-fledged democracy this move was preceded by "a significant, if unsteady, liberalization."<sup>192</sup>

### ***b. Revolutions***

Turning to the question of revolutions and neopatrimonial regimes, Leon Trotsky's words come to mind. "People do not make revolution eagerly any more than they do war....A revolution takes place only when there is no other way out."<sup>193</sup> Revolutions are not merely the offshoot of socio-economic problems in a state, but are also tied to violent and indiscriminate political repression.<sup>194</sup> Goodwin argues that "states largely 'construct' (in this specific sense) the revolutionary movements that

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<sup>189</sup> O'Donnell and Schmitter, *Transitions from Authoritarian Rule*, 6-10, 48-9; Whitehead, "International Aspects of Democratization," 8.

<sup>190</sup> O'Donnell and Schmitter, *Transitions from Authoritarian Rule*, 7, 9.

<sup>191</sup> Ibid., 48-9.

<sup>192</sup> Ibid., 10.

<sup>193</sup> Goodwin, *No Other Way Out*, 26.

<sup>194</sup> Ibid., 3.

challenge and sometimes overthrow them.”<sup>195</sup> His analysis begins with an examination of three foundational traits: the type of state organization, the type of political regime, and the amount of infrastructural power. Type of state organization concerns the difference between a bureaucratic/rational state and a neopatrimonial/clientelistic state, which was already discussed.<sup>196</sup> The second category examines whether a state is classified as liberal/inclusive or repressive/exclusive. Inclusive states allow multiple avenues for participation in decision-making or for voicing dissent. Exclusive regimes distance themselves from popular desires, though not entirely from elites, and exclude groups, sometimes forcibly, from the decision-making process and from virtually all channels for dissent. These regimes may hold elections, but they are little more than tools to justify continued incumbent control. Infrastructural power concerns the fiscal resources at the regime’s disposal and its ability to confront external or internal threats, as well as its ability to administrate and to enforce its laws and desires even in the peripheral regions of the state.<sup>197</sup>

Revolutions are more likely in neopatrimonial states that practice particularly exclusionary behaviors and that are infrastructurally weak. In this situation, opposition figures get pushed in revolutionary directions due to the lack of other outlets, while the state is too weak to destroy them. Uprisings tend to form in the periphery where government enforcement mechanisms cannot reach. Conversely, revolutions are unlikely when a state controls its entire territory, is organized in a bureaucratic/rational fashion, and allows institutional interactions between the state and nonelite organizations. These interactions may be seen as openings to future access to decision-making power, which raises the potential costs of engaging in revolutionary activities. Even though inclusive regimes also have dissent, it typically takes a non-revolutionary form, while

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<sup>195</sup> Goodwin, *No Other Way Out*, 40; F.L. Mokhtari, “Review of No Other Way Out: States and Revolutionary Movements, 1945-1991,” *Choice* 39, no. 11/12 (July/August 2002): 2035; John Foran, “The Sociology of Revolutions: Are There Any Ways Forward?,” *Contemporary Sociology* 32, no. 5 (September 2003): 552.

<sup>196</sup> Goodwin uses the term patrimonial in the same modern fashion that I have been using neopatrimonial. As such, I use neopatrimonial even when discussing his material for the purpose of consistency.

<sup>197</sup> Goodwin, *No Other Way Out*, 11, 13, 38; Mark Katz, “Book Review,” *Studies in Comparative International Development* 37, no. 4 (Winter 2003): 117-8.

infrastructurally strong repressive regimes squelch revolution with their ability to reach out and ‘touch’ their opponents.<sup>198</sup> As such, “neither liberal democratic polities nor authoritarian yet inclusionary (for example, ‘populist’) regimes have generally been challenged by powerful revolutionary movements.”<sup>199</sup> Thus, a bureaucratic authoritarian regime has a much lower likelihood of facing a strong revolutionary movement than its neopatrimonial cousin due to the ability of even limited participation in the former to defuse potentially explosive situations.<sup>200</sup>

Goodwin lists practices that tend to create revolutionary movements. First is the “state sponsorship or protection of unpopular economic and social arrangements or cultural institutions.”<sup>201</sup> Perceived regime and elite domination of key economic sectors falls within this category, as well as issues of religion, taxation, conscription, and legal codes. Second, political exclusion makes a state appear unreformable by ordinary measures and devalues any approach that advocates ‘playing by the rules,’ which pushes people toward radical groups.<sup>202</sup> Third is “indiscriminate, but not overwhelming, state violence against mobilized groups and oppositional political figures.”<sup>203</sup> In self-defense, opposition figures come to the conclusion that the regime must be destroyed if there is going to be a better future. However, the overwhelming application of force serves to prevent even the formation of a coherent opposition.<sup>204</sup> Fourth is “weak policing capacity and weak infrastructural power.”<sup>205</sup> Weakness gives revolutionaries space to grow, whereas a state that can reach into every corner of its borders effectively to attack its enemies is difficult to remove from power.<sup>206</sup> Finally is a “corrupt and arbitrary

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<sup>198</sup> Goodwin, *No Other Way Out*, 26-7, 30, 46-7; Michael Schwartz, “Review of No Other Way Out: States and Revolutionary Movements, 1945-1991,” *American Journal of Sociology* 107, no. 5 (March 2001): 1347; Katz, “Book Reviews,” 117-8; Mokhtari, “Review of No Other Way Out,” 2035.

<sup>199</sup> Goodwin, *No Other Way Out*, 46.

<sup>200</sup> *Ibid.*, 26-7, 30, 46-7.

<sup>201</sup> *Ibid.*, 45.

<sup>202</sup> *Ibid.*, 45-7.

<sup>203</sup> *Ibid.*, 47.

<sup>204</sup> *Ibid.*, 48-9.

<sup>205</sup> *Ibid.*, 49.

<sup>206</sup> *Ibid.*

personalistic rule that alienates, weakens, or divides counterrevolutionary elites.”<sup>207</sup> Moreover, once revolutionary movements form, neopatrimonial regimes have a more difficult time in putting them down than others. The key is the relative unity with the elite and military structures. Since the struggle for power and control over resources tends to play out within these groups, struggles or attempts by the chief executive to weaken or divide actors can create dangerous fissures in the foundation and create openings that revolutionaries can exploit.<sup>208</sup>

Casper and Taylor’s research further highlights the idea that regimes come to face ‘critical junctures’ where they are challenged or would-be challengers see potential openings. These junctures are starting points for any transition and shape the nature of the state for years into the future. Succession falls into this categorization. In this light, socio-economic conditions or grievances are more constraining factors of what is possible than determinants of outcomes in these situations. In contrast to what some argue, a loss of legitimacy is not enough to determine the outcome or to specifically cause the downfall of a regime, since neopatrimonial regimes have low active support requirements. Items that influence outcomes include the presence or absence of preferable alternatives, the threat and ability to use force, and elite cohesiveness.<sup>209</sup>

Now that a thoroughgoing understanding of what the literature says about neopatrimonial transition issues has been established this chapter turns to the analysis portion. The data related to Snyder’s three key categories, the military, moderate oppositionists, and revolutionary oppositionists, in both Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan will be examined and then fed into his Political Trajectories of Neopatrimonial Regimes (see Figure 3) formula to determine what it points to as the most likely result of the ‘critical juncture’ of leadership succession in those states if it happened under current conditions.

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<sup>207</sup> Goodwin, *No Other Way Out*, 49.

<sup>208</sup> Ibid., 49-50.

<sup>209</sup> Adam Przeworski, “Some Problems in the Study of the Transition to Democracy,” In *Transitions from Authoritarian Rule: Prospects for Democracy*, eds. Guillermo O’Donnell, Philippe C. Schmitter, and Laurence Whitehead (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1986), 47-8, 51-2, 56; Casper and Taylor, *Negotiating Democracy*, 22-3; Goodwin, *No Other Way Out*, 12; O’Donnell and Schmitter, *Transitions from Authoritarian Rule*, 19, 21; Stepan, “Paths Toward Democratization,” 77.

## C. UZBEKISTAN

### 1. The Military

President Karimov dominates the military, police, and national security service organs. Karimov brought these ‘power ministries’ into the pact that had ushered him into power and over the years increasingly centralized these potential sources of danger. Built on the foundation of the Soviet Turkestan Military Command that was based in Tashkent, Uzbekistan has the most advanced military in Central Asia—although the bar is low—and according to RAND is the regional power most likely to develop at least a few highly skilled elite units. The Uzbek military is accorded the largest regional budget and numbers 40,000 army and 15,000 air force troops. Its leaders appear more open to change than many of their peers in the region. Doctrine adopted in 2000 identifies terrorism, drug trafficking, and religious extremism as the greatest threats to national security. Hence, it calls for future planning efforts to focus on internal security and the creation of mobile, self-sustaining units. Tasks were divided between the Defense Minister, who is accountable for administrative functions, and the Unified Armed Forces Staff, which is staffed with senior military officers and is responsible for strategic and operational planning activities, as well as combat utilization. In times of crisis, this body controls all military and paramilitary personnel.<sup>210</sup>

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<sup>210</sup> International Crisis Group, “Uzbekistan: Europe’s Sanctions Matter,” 1, 11; Polity IV Project, “Polity IV Country Report 2003: Uzbekistan,” Center for International Development and Conflict Management, 2003, [http://www.cidcm.umd.edu/polity/country\\_reports/Uzb1.htm](http://www.cidcm.umd.edu/polity/country_reports/Uzb1.htm) (accessed February 12, 2007); Collins, “Clans, Pacts and Politics,” 203, 351; Kathleen Collins, *Clan Politics and Regime Transition in Central Asia* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 174; Jim Nichol, “Uzbekistan: Recent Developments and U.S. Interests,” CRS Report for Congress, RS21238, March 9, 2007, 4; Olga Oliker and Thomas S. Szayna, “Sources of Conflict and Paths to U.S. Involvement,” In *Faultlines of Conflict in Central Asia and the South Caucasus: Implications for the U.S. Army*, eds. Olga Oliker and Thomas S. Szayna (Santa Monica, CA: RAND, 2003), 335; William D. O’Malley, “Central Asia and South Caucasus as an Area of Operations: Challenges and Constraints,” In *Faultlines of Conflict in Central Asia and the South Caucasus: Implications for the U.S. Army*, eds. Olga Oliker and Thomas S. Szayna (Santa Monica, CA: RAND, 2003), 292-3, 303-4; Roy Allison, “Conclusion: Central Asia Security in the Regional and International Context,” In *Central Asian Security: The New International Context*, eds. Roy Allison and Lena Jonson (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution Press, 2001), 255; OxResearch, “Central Asia: Perceptions Influence Military Reform,” Oxford Analytica, September 19, 2006, <http://www.oxan.com/> (accessed April 26, 2007); International Crisis Group, “Central Asia: Fault Lines in the New Security Map,” Asia Report, no. 20, July 4, 2001, 10; Martha Brill Olcott, *Central Asia’s New States: Independence, Foreign Policy, and Regional Security* (Washington, D.C.: United States Institute of Peace Press, 1996), 130.



Karimov realized that military support was crucial to regime maintenance and it received considerable attention from the administration. This led to improvements in pay, equipment, and living conditions to boost morale and build loyalty. Most equipment and its maintenance still come from deals made with Moscow. At independence the officer corps was overwhelmingly made up of ethnic Russians. However, Karimov wanted it purged on Russian interests and only 20 percent are now non-Uzbeks; virtually all general officers are ethnic Uzbek. A refusal to grant dual citizenship to Russians and increased Uzbek graduation rates from the indigenous military schools facilitated this. Even among the Uzbek elements, any potential rivals to the current regime have been eradicated.<sup>211</sup> “Like other state institutions in the country, the Defense Ministry is beholden to President Karimov who appoints top-level officials and has the final word on policy decisions.”<sup>212</sup> Olcott considers the military to be a functional arm for state policy and believes that its steady improvement, in addition to a co-opted parliament, is a key reason that Karimov has been able to carry out his foreign policy prerogatives.<sup>213</sup>

Officers, as a group, remain poorly trained and lacking in experience—a legacy of the Soviet period, when extremely few Uzbeks became officers. Evidence exists that the military remains plagued by hazing, a lack of initiative, equipment shortages (although most of it works), a lack of training in low-intensity operations, corruption, housing shortages, and low morale.<sup>214</sup> “As a result, military service is viewed with more dread

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<sup>211</sup> OxResearch, “Central Asia: Perceptions Influence Military Reform”; International Crisis Group, “Central Asia: Fault Lines in the New Security Map,” 10; Collins, *Clan Politics and Regime Transition in Central Asia*, 274; Collins, “Clans, Pacts, and Politics: Understanding Regime Transition in Central Asia,” 351-2; Dianne L. Smith, *Breaking Away from the Bear* (Carlisle, PA: Strategic Studies Institute, U.S. Army War College, 1998), 35; Rustam Burnashev, “Regional Security in Central Asia: Military Aspects,” In *Central Asia: A Gathering Storm?*, ed. Boris Rumer (London & New York: M.E. Sharpe, 2002).

<sup>212</sup> International Crisis Group, “Central Asia: Fault Lines in the New Security Map,” 10.

<sup>213</sup> Olcott, *Central Asia’s New States*, 130.

<sup>214</sup> Ibid; Fund for Peace, “Uzbekistan Indicators,” The Fund for Peace Country Profile, 2006, [http://www.fundforpeace.org/web/index.php?option=com\\_content&task=view&id=16&Itemid=81](http://www.fundforpeace.org/web/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=16&Itemid=81) (accessed June 13, 2007); Charles S. Fairbanks, S. Frederick Starr, C. Richard Nelson, and Kenneth Weisbrode, *Strategic Assessment of Central Eurasia* (Washington, D.C.: Atlantic Council of the United States and Central Asia-Caucasus Institute, 2001), 53-4, [http://www.acus.org/docs/0101-Strategic\\_Assessment\\_Central\\_Eurasia.pdf](http://www.acus.org/docs/0101-Strategic_Assessment_Central_Eurasia.pdf) (accessed June 13, 2007); Allison, “Conclusion: Central Asian Security in the Regional and International Context,” 255.

than pride by many in the country.”<sup>215</sup> Steps are being taken to rectify this. Media outlets regularly tout the honor serving in the armed forces and provide extensive military coverage. Troops are paid on time and, while the amount is still low, that is a rarity in the former Soviet states. A cult of Tamerlane was created to promote interest in the military and respect for service. New military schools were built to prepare the officer corps. These include the Academy of Armed Forces, Tashkent Higher General Troop Command School, Chirchik Higher Tank Command and Engineer’s School, Samarkand Higher Motorized-Artillery School, and the Zhizak Higher Military Aviation School. Some are also sent to Turkey and Russia for training. Ground forces were restructured into a corps/brigade/battalion configuration for increased employment flexibility. Uzbekistan was the only Central Asian state to make this adjustment. New bases are also being constructed around the periphery.<sup>216</sup> At the end of the day, Karimov wants “to create a small but mobile professional army that is fully outfitted with the latest weapons and technology” and above all loyal to him.<sup>217</sup>

The Uzbek National Security Service (SNB), the KGB successor, is a “far more powerful institution than the Ministry of Defense.”<sup>218</sup> The SNB reports directly to Karimov and is better trained and equipped than the armed forces. It is charged with protecting the regime from opposition threats. A long-time Karimov loyalist Rustam Inoyatov leads the organization. The International Crisis Group argues that it is his loyalty that keeps many oppositionists from making a move. Until recently, the Ministry of the Interior also fit this description, but its roughly 19,000 troops have been stripped away and divided between the Ministry of Defense and the SNB.<sup>219</sup> The Fund for Peace refers to the SNB as “one of the most brutal secret police forces in the former Soviet

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<sup>215</sup> International Crisis Group, “Central Asia: Fault Lines in the New Security Map,” 10.

<sup>216</sup> Burnashev, “Regional Security in Central Asia: Military Aspects,” 159; Fairbanks, et al., “Strategic Assessment of Central Eurasia,” 54-5; Olcott, *Central Asia’s New States*, 130.

<sup>217</sup> Burnashev, “Regional Security in Central Asia: Military Aspects,” 158.

<sup>218</sup> Collins, *Clan Politics and Regime Transition in Central Asia*, 274.

<sup>219</sup> Rustam Burnashev and Irina Chernykh, “Changes in Uzbekistan’s Military Policy after the Andijan Events,” *China and Eurasia Forum Quarterly* 5, no. 1 (2007): 71; Nichol, “Uzbekistan: Recent Developments and U.S. Interests,” 4; International Crisis Group, “Uzbekistan: Europe’s Sanctions Matter,” note 75, 11; Fund for Peace, “Uzbekistan Indicators”; Burnashev, “Regional Security in Central Asia: Military Aspects,” 160.

Union” and claims that it “operates with complete impunity.”<sup>220</sup> It appears that Karimov uses access to income generated by natural gas, cotton, and gold to maintain patronage ties to key SNB figures. Inoyatov has heavily staffed the SNB with his supporters and it is for the business operations of his relatives. To further secure his position, Karimov also created an elite Presidential Security Service. Not much is known about the organization, but it is thought to be well trained and equipped. These other security organizations are used to keep tabs on potential threats in the armed forces. Karimov also uses the fact that all three report to him to play them off of each other as necessary.<sup>221</sup>

## **2. Strength of Moderate Opposition Groups**

Ahmed Rashid argues that at independence Uzbekistan had the most developed opposition parties in Central Asia. Birlik, which was critical of the Karimov government and staunchly anti-Russian, held rallies that drew thousands. It was chaired by Abdurahim Polat, a computer scientist from the Uzbek Academy of Sciences. Led by the poet Muhammed Salih, whose real name is Salay Madaminov, the Erk Democratic Party was active during this period after it splintered from Birlik in 1990. The split was precipitated by Salih’s disagreement with calls for more radical measures by certain Birlik elites. Salih favored operating within the existing political structures. Erk’s support base consisted of urban intellectuals. The split weakened both groups and the situation for opposition parties changed quickly in Uzbekistan. By 1993, Karimov had crushed the democratic opposition. The leaders of both parties were in exile, along with many other opposition figures, while numerous senior members were in prison. Birlik and Erk have been refused legal status since that period.<sup>222</sup> The International Crisis Group sums the period up succinctly: “In a span of roughly two years, President Karimov effectively divided, suppressed and banned his political opposition, while consolidating

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<sup>220</sup> Fund for Peace, “Uzbekistan Indicators.”

<sup>221</sup> International Crisis Group, “Central Asia’s Energy Risks,” 5, 24; Collins, *Clan Politics and Regime Transition in Central Asia*, 274-5.

<sup>222</sup> Rashid, *Jihad*, 84; Olcott, “Revisiting the Twelve Myths of Central Asia,” 12; Polity IV Project, “Polity IV Country Report 2003: Uzbekistan”; Kangas, “Uzbekistan—Amir Timur Revisited,” 140-1; International Crisis Group, “Central Asia: Uzbekistan at 10—Repression and Instability,” Asia Report, no. 21, August 21, 2001, 5-6.

his own position within a power structure that had adopted the authoritarian tactics of its Soviet predecessor.”<sup>223</sup> Uzbekistan now consistently ranks among the least democratic states in the world according to Freedom House.<sup>224</sup>

The current opposition environment has not improved. As Martin McCauley put it, “there are political parties but they are merely cosmetic to please the outside world.”<sup>225</sup> Only pro-government parties legally operate. These ‘loyal opposition’ parties include the National Revival Party (state supported intellectuals), Liberal-Democratic Party (regime connected businessmen), Adolat Social Democratic Party, Fidokorlar National Democratic Party (youth party), and the Popular Democratic Party, which was established by Karimov as a successor to the Communist Party. Designed as ‘window dressing’ instead of real agents for political pluralism, these organizations have little public support or credibility.<sup>226</sup> “Political parties...have no noticeable influence on the political life of the country.”<sup>227</sup> They are merely extensions of and rubberstamps for the regime. Above and beyond their public relations role, these parties afford the additional benefit to Karimov of providing a forum to generate rivalry between his own subordinates. Combined with election law manipulation and political intimidation these have effectively eliminated competition.<sup>228</sup>

For their part, the opposition parties are weak, fragmented, and suspicious of one another. Although its activists continue to seek the party’s legalization, Birlik has a

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<sup>223</sup> International Crisis Group, “Central Asia: Uzbekistan at 10—Repression and Instability,” 6.

<sup>224</sup> Abdujalil Abdurasulov, “Uzbekistan’s President has been clever about staying in power but less so about making life better for his people.” *Transitions Online*, February 14, 2007. <http://www.tol.cz/look/TOL/article.tpl?IdLanguage=1&IdPublication=4&NrIssue=2-5&NrSection=4&nrArticle=18308>. (accessed March 1, 2007).

<sup>225</sup> Martin McCauley, *Afghanistan and Central Asia: A Modern History* (London and New York: Longman, 2002), 112.

<sup>226</sup> Nichol, “Uzbekistan: Recent Developments and U.S. Interests,” 5; International Crisis Group, “Central Asia: Uzbekistan at 10—Repression and Instability,” 8; Polity IV Project, “Polity IV Country Report 2003: Uzbekistan”; Collins, “Clans, Pacts, and Politics in Central Asia,” 147; Ilkhamov, “Controllable Democracy in Uzbekistan,” 10; Kangas, “Uzbekistan: Evolving Authoritarianism,” 178.

<sup>227</sup> International Crisis Group, “Central Asia: Uzbekistan at 10—Repression and Instability,” 8.

<sup>228</sup> Paul Kubicek, “Authoritarianism in Central Asia: Curse or Cure?,” *Third World Quarterly* 19, no. 1 (March 1998): 32; Polity IV Project, “Polity IV Country Report 2003: Uzbekistan”; Shahram Akbarzadeh, *Uzbekistan and the United States: Authoritarianism, Islamism & Washington’s Security Agenda* (London & New York: Zed Books, 2005), 13.

minimal presence and retains few supporters. It primarily serves to enhance global awareness of regime abuses in an effort to generate outside pressure and to promote the work of human rights organizations. Erk is in a similar state and the two groups continue to be divided by their rivalry. Each accuses the other of entering into deals with Karimov; thus, furthering his divide and conquer agenda. In 2005, opposition elements attempted to unite in a coalition called My Sunny Uzbekistan under the leadership of Sanjar Umarov and Nigora Hidoyatova. Umarov is a millionaire businessman, while Hidoyatova led the Free Farmer's Party. This coalition called for faster economic and political reform. Umarov was arrested and, according to some reports, kept in solitary confinement in a drugged condition. Hidoyatova's husband was killed in Kazakhstan in November 2005 and her sister arrested in December. The deputy head of Birlik, Hamdam Sulaymonov and one of its founding members, Dadakhon Hasonov were also arrested. Both Umarov and Hidoyatova received decade long prison sentences.<sup>229</sup> Opposition parties have not helped their own case with the populace. They lack consistent, persuasive, and relevant platforms. A crisis of confidence in the secular parties exists and, when tied to regime crackdowns, people are hesitant to join. Some say this would be the case even if the parties were legal.<sup>230</sup> This is in line with Kangas' argument that "the likelihood of change 'from below' appears unlikely, at present."<sup>231</sup>

A small group of activists remain in Uzbekistan. They operate in a clandestine manner due to risks of arrest and danger for their families. Opposition elements are also not united. This includes those in and outside its borders.<sup>232</sup> Elite support has been what Olcott refers to as a "parlor" phenomenon among some mid and senior level

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<sup>229</sup> Eric McGlinchey, "The Making of Militants: The State and Islam in Central Asia," *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East* 25, no. 3 (2005): 560; International Crisis Group, "Uzbekistan: In for the Long Haul," 4; Nichol, "Uzbekistan: Recent Developments and U.S. Interests," 6; Olcott, "Revisiting the Twelve Myths of Central Asia," 12; International Crisis Group, "Central Asia: Uzbekistan at 10—Repression and Instability," 7-8; Fiona Hill and Kevin Jones, "Fear of Democracy or Revolution: The Reaction to Andijon," *The Washington Quarterly* 29, no. 3 (Summer 2006):118..

<sup>230</sup> Ibid., 8.

<sup>231</sup> Kangas, "Uzbekistan—Amir Timur Revisited," 141.

<sup>232</sup> Olcott, "Revisiting the Twelve Myths of Central Asia," 12; Martha Brill Olcott, "Briefing on Prospects for Political Change in Uzbekistan," Briefing, Helsinki Commission, Washington, D.C., July 25, 2006, [http://www.centralasianvoices.org/2006/12/helsinki\\_commission\\_briefing\\_o.cfm](http://www.centralasianvoices.org/2006/12/helsinki_commission_briefing_o.cfm) (accessed June 7, 2007).

bureaucrats mostly conducted in private. “Now, post-Andijon and the dismissals and arrests of a few politically prominent individuals, the closet reformers have dug down deeper into anonymity, venting their displeasure in ever smaller circles.”<sup>233</sup> For her and Weitz this extinguishes the possibility of a ‘color revolution’ in Uzbekistan’s foreseeable future in spite of Muhammad Salih’s claims that the exiled opposition members can succeed in that endeavor. There are similarities between Uzbekistan and states experiencing forced transitions. Political repression, a lack of mechanisms for political change, economic hardship, and extensive corruption are common to all; however, revolutions in Kyrgyzstan, Georgia, and the Ukraine were led by elite forces inside the country which were married to a population willing to risk taking to the streets. Opposition leaders had administrative experience and a support base to draw upon. In Uzbekistan, the three most prominent oppositionists are: 1) Shukrualla Mirsaidov—a former regime insider, who currently lives under house arrest in Tashkent; 2) Salih—the leader of Erk, who was sentenced to 15 years imprisonment in absentia for ‘terrorist acts’ and currently resides in Norway and Turkey; and 3) Polat—head of Birlik, who has split time between Turkey and the United States. While evidence exists that there are reform elements in the bureaucracy, private sector, military, and elite structures, there is no evidence they are organized or even aware of each other’s existence.<sup>234</sup> Essentially, “Uzbekistan lacks a credible opposition movement or leader.”<sup>235</sup>

Government policies concerning nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) further complicate the situation for moderate oppositionists. As was the case with political parties, Uzbekistan had the most developed group of NGOs at independence. Like the parties they have been decimated. In 2004, the regime took control of NGO funding inside the state. NGOs are now required to deposit all funds in government controlled

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<sup>233</sup> Olcott, “Briefing on Prospects for Political Change in Uzbekistan.”

<sup>234</sup> Martha Brill Olcott, “Confronting Karimov,” *The Moscow Times*, May 25, 2005, <http://www.carnegieendowment.org/publications/index.cfm?fa=view&id=17004&prog=zru> (accessed October 4, 2006); Olcott, “Briefing on Prospects for Political Change in Uzbekistan”; Daniil Kislov, “Mukhammad Salikh urges the West to support a peaceful revolution in Uzbekistan,” *Ferghana.ru*, January 30, 2006, <http://www.ferghana.ru/> (accessed April 6, 2007); Richard Weitz, “Central Asia’s Challenging March Toward Democracy,” *Central Asia-Caucasus Analyst* 6, no. 13 (June 29, 2005): 10, <http://www.cacianalyst.org/issues/20050629Analyst.pdf> (accessed October 5, 2006).

<sup>235</sup> Ibid.

banking facilities, providing accurate tracking of their financial relationships. Foreign-based NGOs with reform and democracy promotion agendas were removed from the country through government suspensions and refusals to register them. There was an increased effort to remove potential sources of information critical of the government and to silence prospective wellsprings of dissent. NGO activists experienced surveillance, intimidation, physical assault, arrest, prosecution, and searches of their homes and offices. Many fled the state in self-imposed exile. Freedom House argues that the NGO sector is on the verge of complete elimination.<sup>236</sup>

Civil society in general has been ravaged. In Naumkin's words, Uzbekistan is a "clan-based society with no national civil society to speak of."<sup>237</sup> While the state is not completely devoid of civil society, it is by no means a fertile field. The reach of the stocks of social capital currently does not extend beyond the borders of clan and family. The regime has co-opted one of the traditional civil society institutions, the mahallas, into its power structure. Mahallas are traditionally autonomous neighborhood groups built around family and Islamic ties that may comprise up to several hundred families, but typically does not exceed 5,000 people with most being much smaller. A Council of Elders made up of six to eight individuals oversee a mahalla. Mahallas provide local governance through dispute resolution, the distribution of resources and information, and the mobilization of members for community projects and life-cycle ceremonies. Mahallas now receive government funds and are used to control districts. The regime also seeks to damage civil society institutions by discouraging charitable donations to mosques.<sup>238</sup> Overall, while "the country's intelligentsia and civil society groups may

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<sup>236</sup> Carl Gershman and Michael Allen, "The Assault on Democracy Assistance," *Journal of Democracy* 17, no. 2 (April 2006): 42; Olcott, "Revisiting the Twelve Myths of Central Asia," 12; Freedom House, "Freedom in the World—Uzbekistan," Freedom House Freedom in the World Report, 2006, [http://freedomhouse.org/inc/content/pubs/fiw/inc\\_country\\_detail.cfm?year=2006&country=7086&pf](http://freedomhouse.org/inc/content/pubs/fiw/inc_country_detail.cfm?year=2006&country=7086&pf) (accessed February 12, 2007); Nichol, "Uzbekistan: Recent Developments and U.S. Interests," 6; International Helsinki Federation for Human Rights, "Human Rights Defenders at Risk in Belarus, Russia, and Uzbekistan," Briefing paper, EU Forum on Human Rights, Helsinki, Finland, December 7-8, 2006, 16; Babken Babajanian, Sabine Freizer, and Daniel Stevens, "Introduction: Civil Society in Central Asia and the Caucasus," *Central Asian Survey* 24, no. 3 (September 2005): 219.

<sup>237</sup> Vitaly Naumkin, "Uzbekistan's State-Building Fatigue," *The Washington Quarterly* 29, no. 3 (Summer 2006): 127.

<sup>238</sup> *Ibid.*, 131; Babajanian, et al., "Introduction: Civil Society in Central Asia and the Caucasus," 219.

have clear aspirations for a different political system, they are out of step with the basic concerns and desires of the population.”<sup>239</sup> The regime has utilized formal and informal means to suppress civil society elements and create this state of affairs.

Additionally, Karimov “dominates all three branches of government.”<sup>240</sup> Despite formal constitutional separation of powers, neither parliament nor the judiciary has any real power or independence. Personal loyalty to Karimov is the defining characteristic of both. The president appoints all judges and can remove them at his discretion. During civil trials judges are monitored by an executive agency that can bring criminal charges against them, which helps insure executive control of case outcomes. There is a lack of public accountability for executive decisions.<sup>241</sup> “His most important act has been to institutionalize presidential decrees as a means of implementing policy, effectively circumventing the other branches of government.”<sup>242</sup> In what Hill and Jones refer to as a ‘super-presidential’ system, politics in Uzbekistan is a product of back room deals made by vested elites. The center grew stronger at the expense of the regions over the last decade as Karimov used his resource power derived from commodity exports to strengthen his patronage networks.<sup>243</sup>

President Karimov regularly receives condemnation by international monitoring agencies for his regime’s suppression of dissent. Unsanctioned meetings and demonstrations are prohibited. Freedom of speech and the press is nonexistent. The government controls the major television, radio, and newspaper outlets. The few independent outlets that exist avoid political topics and practice self censorship to avoid difficulties with authorities. Reporters violating this face violence, harassment, potential prosecution, and closure of the organs they work for. Cimera, the media watchdog, states

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<sup>239</sup> Hill and Jones, “Fear of Democracy or Revolution: The Reaction to Andijon,” 120.

<sup>240</sup> Polity IV Project, “Polity IV Country Report 2003: Uzbekistan.”

<sup>241</sup> Robert Freedman, “Nations in Transit—Uzbekistan,” Freedom House, 2006, <http://www.freedomhouse.org/template.cfm?page=47&nit=410&year=2006> (accessed October 7, 2006); Hill and Jones, “Fear of Democracy or Revolution: The Reaction to Andijon,” 117-8; Polity IV Project, “Polity IV Country Report 2003: Uzbekistan”; Freedom House, “Freedom in the World—Uzbekistan”; Quillen, “Democracy—A Tree Without Roots on the Steppes of Central Asia,” 45-6.

<sup>242</sup> Kangas, “Uzbekistan: Evolving Authoritarianism,” 179.

<sup>243</sup> Hill and Jones, “Fear of Democracy or Revolution: The Reaction to Andijon,” 118.



there is not a single outlet that can present an alternative to the official view. Uzbekistan's human rights record is considered abysmal with numerous documented cases of the killing and torture of opponents. Human rights defenders are jailed and held for extended periods without charges or the right to communicate with the outside world. In a move harkening back to the Soviet period, some are sent to mental hospitals.<sup>244</sup>

Uzbekistan's Freedom House ratings of seven (Not Free) on a seven point scale in both civil and political rights are the worst possible. Furthermore, the regime's scores on the Bertelsmann Transformation Index (BTI) and the Polity IV metrics place it squarely in the category of autocracy. On a scale where ten is the highest ranking, Uzbekistan received an overall rating of 3.13, including a 2.0 in both rule of law and political participation and a 1.0 in democratic institutional stability. Polity IV ranks the Karimov regime a nine on a ten point scale for autocracy and the lowest score of zero for the openness of political institutions. Its overall grade is a minus nine on a scale where minus ten is the lowest Polity score given.<sup>245</sup> In a major understatement, Quillen argued these indicators show that "the country is making very little progress toward democratic rule."<sup>246</sup> McGlinchey contends that "barred from traditional—and as we saw in the Kirghiz case—moderating avenues for political dissent, a growing number of Uzbek oppositionists have turned to militant Islamist movements in the hopes of destabilizing President Karimov's totalitarian regime."<sup>247</sup> That is where this examination now turns.

### **3. Strength of Revolutionary Groups**

McGlinchey further argues that domestic opposition groups alter their tactics based on the amount of political contestation allowed in the system. If open opposition is

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<sup>244</sup> William J. Charamut II, "Policing the Silk Road: Do the Central Asian States Need the United States and Russia to Create and Maintain Stability?" (master's thesis, Naval Postgraduate School, 2005), 22; Freedman, "Nations in Transit—Uzbekistan"; Quillen, "Democracy—A Tree Without Roots on the Steppes of Central Asia," 42-5; McGlinchey, "The Making of Militants: The State and Islam in Central Asia," 564; Freedom House, "Freedom in the World—Uzbekistan"; Bichel, "Contending Theories of Central Asia," 68; Nichol, "Uzbekistan: Recent Developments and U.S. Interests," 6.

<sup>245</sup> Freedman, "Nations in Transit—Uzbekistan"; Quillen, "Democracy—A Tree Without Roots on the Steppes of Central Asia," 42-5; Freedom House, "Freedom in the World—Uzbekistan."

<sup>246</sup> Quillen, "Democracy—A Tree Without Roots on the Steppes of Central Asia," 45.

<sup>247</sup> McGlinchey, "The Making of Militants: The State and Islam in Central Asia," 564.

allowed, then regime opponents typically utilize the existing institutions of political parties, civil society groups, and the media to advance their agenda and achieve power. When this option is foreclosed, opposition elements are more likely to seek revolutionary change.<sup>248</sup> Characterizing the situation, Verme states that “for those who visit Uzbekistan today, it is evident that the country is dominated by fear. The government fears its own people and the people fear its own government.”<sup>249</sup> Civil discontent continues to rise as economic conditions for average Uzbekistanis remain on a downward slope. International Monetary Fund statistics cite a poverty rate of 27 percent, while World Bank figures show 47 percent, with higher figures in several districts. The education system is in a state of decay, the healthcare system is poor, and corruption is extensive. These lead various analysts to conclude that the country may descend to failed statehood and become the greatest source of regional instability. Some warn that popular discontent could boil over and lead to an Islamic revolution; particularly given that all secular opposition has been crushed and the Karimov regime remains the primary focus of radical Islamist elements in Central Asia. Various commentators single out Uzbekistan as the only Central Asian state that truly faces an extreme Islamist or terrorist threat. Indeed, Uzbekistani officials publicly espouse their view that this is the case.<sup>250</sup>

President Karimov wrote in 1998 that “modern history has accumulated many facts to testify that these extremely radical manifestations give rise to serious conflicts and contradictions, and threaten stability and security.”<sup>251</sup> In a country that is 88 percent Muslim, Karimov has unswervingly targeted radical Islamic elements as national security

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<sup>248</sup> McGlinchey, “The Making of Militants: The State and Islam in Central Asia,” 560.

<sup>249</sup> Paolo Verme, “Macroeconomic Policies and Social Unrest in Uzbekistan,” *Post-Soviet Affairs* 22, no. 3 (July-September 2006): 284.

<sup>250</sup> Jim Nichol, “Unrest in Uzbekistan: Context and Implications,” CRS Report for Congress, RS22161, June 8, 2005, 3-4; Ruslan Nagaev and Ulhom Ahmedov, “Security Service Veterans Rising to the Top in Uzbekistan,” *Eurasia Daily Monitor* 4, no. 72 (April 12, 2007), <http://www.jamestown.org/edm/> (accessed April 24, 2007); Nichol, “Central Asia’s Security: Issues and Implications for U.S. Interests,” 3; Dosym Satpayev, “Uzbekistan is subject to the worst risk of terrorism in the Central Asian Region,” *Ferghana.ru*, September 13, 2004, <http://www.ferghana.ru/> (accessed April 6, 2007); Ahmed Rashid, “Russia, China Warily Watch for American Intrusions in Central Asia,” *Foreign Policy in Focus Global Affairs Commentary*, May 3, 2002, 2, <http://www.fpif.org/pdf/gac/OUS0205centasia2.pdf> (accessed June 13, 2007).

<sup>251</sup> Islam Karimov, *Uzbekistan on the Threshold of the Twenty-First Century* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1998), 19-20.

risks. He regularly applies the Islamist terrorism label to any opposition activities. Over his tenure laws concerning religious activities have been tightened. On paper post-Soviet Uzbek law enhanced religious freedom, but in reality it strengthened government control of the muftiate, the chief Islamic religious organ in the state, by making it the state-controlled Spiritual Administration of Muslims. In 1993, Karimov replaced a Namangan affiliated figure with one from a mosque in his home region of Samarkand. Religious political parties, like the Islamic Renaissance Party, were outlawed by a 1991 law, a provision subsequently added to the constitution. Sermon content is regulated, while the Koran and prayer are prohibited inside of prisons. In 1998, the Law on Freedom of Conscience and Religious Organizations was passed. It prohibited proselytizing, religious classes in schools, private religious teaching without a license, and the wear of religious clothing by non-clergy. Religious organizations are required to register. This includes providing a list of all members. A second law passed that year stiffened the penalties for carrying out the activities outlined above. In 2006, Uzbekistan was listed as ‘a country of particular concern’ on the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom annual report.<sup>252</sup>

“Leaders have not taken pains to distinguish between religious activists, religious extremists, and Islamic terrorists. Effectively, anyone who advocates the primacy of religious values over secular norms is understood to be ‘an enemy of the state,’ whether or not this primacy is to be achieved through persuasion or through force.”<sup>253</sup> Roughly 7,000 have been imprisoned on extremism charges and many mosques and madrassahs have been closed. Numerous religious leaders are confined or in exile. Major crackdowns occurred in 1992, 1993, 1997, 1999, and 2004. The two groups typically named in the accusations are the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan and the Hizb ut-

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<sup>252</sup> Timothy Craig, “The Shanghai Cooperation Organization: Origins and Implications” (master’s thesis, Naval Postgraduate School, 2003), 30-1; International Crisis Group, “Uzbekistan: The Andijon Uprising,” Asia Briefing, no. 38, May 25, 2005, 7; Quillen, “Democracy—A Tree Without Roots on the Steppes of Central Asia,” 60-2; Nichol, “Central Asia’s Security: Issues and Implications for U.S. Interests,” 4; Collins, “Clans, Pacts, and Politics: Understanding Regime Transition in Central Asia,” 289; Akbarzadeh, *Uzbekistan and the United States*, 28; Rashid, *Jihad*, 85.

<sup>253</sup> Martha Brill Olcott, “Central Asia: Terrorism, Religious Extremisms, Regional Security,” Testimony, House Committee on International Relations, Washington, D.C., October 29, 2003, <http://www.carnegieendowment.org/publications/index.cfm?fa=view&id=1387&prog=zru> (accessed October 4, 2006).

Tahrir. While some individuals are likely intent on carrying out terrorist acts, most appear to simply be regime opponents or average practicing Muslims. Public expressions of faith, religious clothing, and beards are discouraged. Violators often face intimidation or incarceration. Charges of extremism are often leveled by local security personnel as a method to extort bribes or settle old scores. The mere possession of religious literature is often enough to cause an arrest.<sup>254</sup>

Uzbekistan is the most religious country in Central Asia. There is a general consensus that, if a revolutionary Islamic challenge arises, it will do so in the Ferghana Valley, the historic home to regional Islamic movements and the focus of militant groups since independence. Challenges to both Tsarist Russia and the Soviet Union arose there. This likely played into Josef Stalin's thinking when he split the region between Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, and Kyrgyzstan in the 1920s. The current regime appears to share this view and the valley is an area of the utmost concern. Roughly seven million of Uzbekistan's twenty-eight million people are packed into an area representing only 5 percent of its territory. Population density is 340 people per square kilometer versus a state average of 53. Sixty percent of these are under the age of twenty-five with large numbers entering the job market each year. This is occurring in a region where unemployment is at least 35 percent. Correspondingly, poverty is high. Land crises, along with government farming regulations, add to the social unrest.<sup>255</sup> As Rashid stated, "these young people are jobless, restless, and hungry, and their numbers are growing."<sup>256</sup>

It is not surprising then that the valley is a chief recruiting center and training ground for radical fundamentalists. Rashid argues that the nightmare scenario for Karimov is an alliance between the Ferghana Valley clan elites and the Islamists.<sup>257</sup>

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<sup>254</sup> Olcott, "Central Asia: Terrorism, Religious Extremisms, Regional Security"; Nichol, "Central Asia's Security: Issues and Implications for U.S. Interests," 4; International Crisis Group, "Uzbekistan: The Andijon Uprising," 8; Rashid, *Jihad*, 84.

<sup>255</sup> Jessica N. Trisko, "Coping with the Islamist Threat: Analyzing Repression in Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Uzbekistan," *Central Asian Survey* 24, no. 4 (December 2005): 380; Akbarzadeh, *Uzbekistan and the United States*, 112; Quillen, "Democracy—A Tree Without Roots on the Steppes of Central Asia," 61; Rashid, *Jihad*, 81-2; Charamut, "Policing the Silk Road," 23; Naumkin, "Uzbekistan's State-Building Fatigue," 128; Rashid, "The New Struggle in Central Asia," 35.

<sup>256</sup> Rashid, *Jihad*, 81-2.

<sup>257</sup> Charamut, "Policing the Silk Road," 23; Rashid, *Jihad*, 151.

Karimov has concentrated on the region since late 1991 when fundamentalist members of Adolat took control of Namangan's Communist Party building and called for him to come to the city to begin negotiations for making Uzbekistan an Islamic state. They replaced imams who remained loyal to the state, assumed the functions of local government, and attempted to institute Shari'a law. Karimov cracked down on the Islamists—arresting many and dispersing the others. Some escaped to Tajikistan to participate in the civil war there under the banner of that state's Islamic Renaissance Party. The government's continued focus on the area is exemplified by personnel maneuverings. In 2006 and 2007, many senior positions, particularly in Ferghana (city), Namangan, Kokand, and Andijon, were allocated to security service and law enforcement veterans, while those lacking this background have been purged. Furthermore, new religious restrictions were put in place in the Andijon province in an attempt to weaken religious groups. Children are no longer permitted to attend prayers at mosques, employers cannot allow workers to pray at work, and mosques can no longer issue calls to prayer.<sup>258</sup>

Arising from the ashes of Adolat, Islam Lashkarlari, and the Islamic Renaissance Party, the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU) was created sometime between 1996 and 1998 for the express purpose of overthrowing Karimov and creating an Islamic state. The IMU was led by Tohir Yuldeshev, an underground mullah, and Juma Namangani, a former Soviet paratrooper and the organization's military commander whose real name was Jumaboi Ahmadzhanovitch Khojaev. Both were leaders in Adolat and its militant wing, Islam Lashkarlari. They had led the Namangan Communist Party building takeover. After Karimov's crackdown in the Ferghana in 1992, Yuldashev fled to Afghanistan, while Namangani went to Tajikistan and fought with the United Tajik Opposition against the government. The IMU established bases in Taliban controlled Afghanistan. There it received training and fiscal support from the Taliban and Al Qaeda

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<sup>258</sup> Jeffrey A. Smith, "Counterinsurgency in Uzbekistan: An Adapted FID Strategy for Policy Consideration" (Master's thesis, Naval Postgraduate School, 2002), 28; Naumkin, "Uzbekistan's State-Building Fatigue," 128-9; Nagaev and Ahmedov, "Security Service Veterans Rising to the Top in Uzbekistan"; Quillen, "Democracy—A Tree Without Roots on the Steppes of Central Asia," 62-3; Alisher Khamidov, "Religious Discontent Evident in the Ferghana Valley," *Eurasianet.org*, January 17, 2007, <http://www.eurasianet.org/departments/insight/articles/eav011707a.shtml> (accessed June 7, 2007); Craig,

and carried out operations and hostage-takings in Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan, which led to its 2000 listing as a terrorist organization by the State Department.<sup>259</sup>

The group is credited with the February 16, 1999 Tashkent bombings that appeared to target President Karimov. Six bombs were set off within an hour and fifteen minutes of each other at government facilities—an unplanned delay prevented Karimov from being present at one of the sites. Twenty-eight individuals were killed and three hundred wounded. Yuldashev and Namangani were both tried in absentia and given death sentences. Overall, small unit armed infiltration was its primary modus operandi. This was characterized by numerous border confrontations in 1999 and 2000. Hostage taking and opium smuggling were used during this time to provide financial resources. Tajikistan was used extensively as a safe haven. There were reports that the IMU was heavily involved in the Taliban's 2001 offensive against the Northern Alliance.<sup>260</sup> From March 28 to April 1, 2004 another series of attacks and bombings occurred in Bukhara and Tashkent resulting in the deaths of forty-seven people. These events contained the first Central Asian appearance of female suicide bombers. The incidents were claimed by the Islamic Jihad Group (IJG), reportedly an IMU splinter—although it is possible this was a completely new organization. IMU member Najmiddin Jalolov reportedly led this faction. This was followed on July 30 by suicide bombings at the Israeli and U.S. embassies, along with the Uzbek Prosecutor General's office. This was the first targeting of foreign entities in the region. Both the IMU and IJG claimed credit. These attacks

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"The Shanghai Cooperation Organization," 26.

<sup>259</sup> Charamut, "Policing the Silk Road," 25-7; Naumkin, "Uzbekistan's State-Building Fatigue," 129; Craig, "The Shanghai Cooperation Organization," 26-8; Smith, "Counterinsurgency in Uzbekistan," 28-9.

<sup>260</sup> Smith, "Counterinsurgency in Uzbekistan," 29-31; Nichol, "Central Asia's Security: Issues and Implications for U.S. Interests," 6-8; Charamut, "Policing the Silk Road," 27-9; Nichol, "Uzbekistan: Recent Developments and U.S. Interests," 4-5; United Nations Development Programme, *Central Asia Human Development Report—Bringing Down Barriers: Regional Cooperation for Human Development and Human Security* (Bratislava, Slovakia: UNDP Regional Bureau for Europe and the Commonwealth of Independent States, 2005), 126.

appeared tied to prosecution efforts for the March-April events. The IJG was subsequently added to the list of specially designated global terrorists by the U.S. State Department.<sup>261</sup>

Numerous IMU members were killed or dispersed during Operation Enduring Freedom while fighting alongside the Taliban. This list includes Namangani, who was killed at Kunduz in November 2001. There is speculation that Yuldashev is currently hiding somewhere in Pakistan. Overall, observers contend that the organization's capabilities are thoroughly degraded and its ability to successfully reconstitute is an object of contention. Rashid doubts its ability to rebuild, while a RAND study argues that it may at least regain the ability for small-scale actions.<sup>262</sup> Jeffrey Smith argues that "the actual threat of the IMU may be small and its chances for success even smaller."<sup>263</sup> What is more, the IMU contingents located in the tribal areas of Pakistan appear to face pressure from local militias who also support the Taliban and Al Qaeda. Clashes broke out near Wana in March 2007 between Pashtun tribesmen from South Waziristan in the Federally Administered Tribal Areas and IMU affiliated Uzbek militants. Pakistani military units may also have participated on the side of the tribesmen. The official death toll was approximately 170. Fighting allegedly broke out after the Uzbeks killed some

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<sup>261</sup> Nichol, "Central Asia's Security: Issues and Implications for U.S. Interests," 6-8; Charamut, "Policing the Silk Road," 27-9; Freedom House, "Freedom in the World—Uzbekistan (2006)"; Nichol, "Uzbekistan: Recent Developments and U.S. Interests," 4-5; Ariel Cohen, "After the Uzbekistan Terror Attacks: Don't Sanction, but Press for Democracy," Heritage Foundation, WebMemo no. 496, May 4, 2004, <http://www.heritage.org/Research/RussiaandEurasia/wm496.cfm> (accessed May 31, 2007); Richard Boucher, "U.S. Department of State Designates the Islamic Jihad Group under Executive Order 13224," U.S. Department of State, May 26, 2005, <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/prs/ps/2005/46838.htm> (accessed May 31, 2007); United Nations Development Programme, *Central Asia Human Development Report—Bringing Down Barriers*, 126.

<sup>262</sup> Nichol, "Central Asia's Security: Issues and Implications for U.S. Interests," 5; Craig, "The Shanghai Cooperation Organization," 28; Charamut, "Policing the Silk Road," 30; Akbarzadeh, *Uzbekistan and the United States*, 34; Oliker and Szayna, "Sources of Conflict and Paths to U.S. Involvement," 332.

<sup>263</sup> Smith, "Counterinsurgency in Uzbekistan," 27.

Pakistani tribal leaders they accused of spying for the government. Somewhere between 1,000 and 2,000 IMU fighters are said to be located there.<sup>264</sup>

There are reports that the IMU is regrouping in the Ferghana Valley for future operations, but the actual level of support it retains in Uzbekistan is unknown. The brand of Islam it advocates has not been historically embraced. However, it does have a social basis to undermine the regime with based on its ability to exploit state-society conflicts, such as the low standard of living.<sup>265</sup> According to Akbarzadeh “people rarely joined the IMU in the name of an ideal—it was a step they took mainly because of their poor living conditions.”<sup>266</sup> He argues that the group’s potential to create chaos in the region and pursue its goals was vastly overstated all along. Essentially, they never represented a real threat to the Karimov regime.<sup>267</sup> Naumkin simply states that no one knows if the IMU can, or already has, resurfaced as an organizational force capable of recruiting extensively and conducting violent operations.<sup>268</sup> The attendant risks of government reprisal for supporting the IMU have risen to even greater levels. This may lead potential recruits to move toward Hizb ut-Tahrir, which, although illegal throughout Central Asia, much of the Middle East, Germany, and Russia, has not been designated a terrorist organization by the majority of the international community or appear to engage in drug

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<sup>264</sup> Daniel Kimmage, “Central Asia: Has IMU Reached the End of the Line?,” *Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty*, March 30, 2007, <http://www.rferl.org/featuresarticle/2007/03/7a04b472-5c21-498d-8d62-dab6f7f31b32.html> (accessed April 6, 2007); Bruce Pannier, “Pakistan: Crackdown Could Pose Threat to Central Asia,” *Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty*, March 28, 2007, <http://www.rferl.org/featuresarticle/2007/03/19d63162-84fe-4753-8084-dc58b6aff92d.html> (accessed April 6, 2007).

<sup>265</sup> Naumkin, *Radical Islam in Central Asia*, xii; Akbarzadeh, *Uzbekistan and the United States*, 34; Smith, “Counterinsurgency in Uzbekistan,” 29, 32-4.

<sup>266</sup> Akbarzadeh, *Uzbekistan and the United States*, 33.

<sup>267</sup> *Ibid.*, 34.

<sup>268</sup> Naumkin, *Radical Islam in Central Asia*, 118.



trafficking.<sup>269</sup> “Whereas the IMU largely discredited itself in the public eye because of its violent approach, [Hizb ut-Tahrir] is gradually presenting itself as the only viable opposition to the present ruling elites.”<sup>270</sup>

Founded by Sheik Taqiuddin al-Nabhani, a Palestinian Sufi scholar, in 1953, Hizb ut-Tahrir (HT) spread to Central Asia after the fall of the Soviet Union. The organization’s regional goal is the overthrow of the current Central Asian governments and their replacement with a transnational Caliphate. It espouses non-violence and appears to believe its membership will eventually grow to sufficient levels to achieve this objective through peaceful means. On the other hand, HT’s rhetoric grew more militant in the wake of Operation Enduring Freedom, calling on Muslims to mobilize, rise up, assist the Taliban, and defend themselves against the United States, United Kingdom, and Israel. HT is hierarchical and cellular in nature and observes strict rules of secrecy. It operates in five member cells and only the leader knows the head of the next echelon. Some compare it to the pre-revolutionary Bolsheviks in methods and aims. While the IMU’s primary recruiting ground is the rural farm communities, HT support stems from the urbanized intelligentsia, especially students and teachers. This base is expanding, particularly in the Ferghana Valley, as urban members recruit rural farmers. Its message of social justice and Islamic unity resonates among the young, who are particularly alienated from Karimov’s regime by failing economic prospects. The majority of its projected Central Asian membership of 15,000-20,000 is made up of Uzbeks and the groups popularity among them continues to grow. While it does not appear to have carried out any violent operations in Uzbekistan, HT members were previously implicated in coup attempts against King Hussein II of Jordan and its literature calls on

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<sup>269</sup> Ibid.; Charamut, “Policing the Silk Road,” 21; Naumkin, “Uzbekistan’s State-Building Fatigue,” 129.

<sup>270</sup> Svante E. Cornell and Regine A. Spector, “Central Asia: More than Islamic Extremists,” *The Washington Quarterly* 25, no. 1 (Winter 2002): 200.

the faithful to take up arms when the emir calls on them to do so.<sup>271</sup> Zeyno Baran contends that “by combining fascist rhetoric, Leninist strategy, and Western sloganeering with Wahhabi theology, HT has made itself into a very real and potent threat.”<sup>272</sup> As such, speculation persists that HT’s Central Asian contingent will eventually move against the Karimov regime, while others doubt its capability to do so and see the greatest threat in HT’s members being co-opted by another organization seeking to foment revolution.<sup>273</sup>

The International Crisis Group contends militant Islamic movements found an infertile ground in the Russified, secularized Uzbekistan that emerged at independence. Studies showed political Islam to be moderate at that time. While Uzbekistan contained the most religious Central Asian population, most citizens had limited knowledge of Islamic precepts. This was particularly the case among the younger stratum. Interest was, nonetheless, on the rise and Uzbekistan contained many historic Islamic cities, such as Samarkand, Bukhara, and Khiva. Conversely, few citizens indicated a preference for a politically active variant. However, elements of the new landscape affected that state of affairs. Popular discontent with declining living standards with no improvements in sight, government corruption and abuses, and the crushing of secular opposition modified the ground truth to some extent.<sup>274</sup> “The role of Islam in political life is increasing...because religious protest is the only form of dissent left after the

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<sup>271</sup> Eric McGlinchey, “Autocrats, Islamists, and the Rise of Radicalism in Central Asia,” *Current History* 104, no. 684 (October 2005): 338; Craig, “The Shanghai Cooperation Organization,” 27; Naumkin, *Radical Islam in Central Asia*, xii; Charamut, “Policing the Silk Road,” 32-6; Naumkin, “Uzbekistan’s State-Building Fatigue,” 129-30; Cornell and Spector, “Central Asia: More than Islamic Extremists,” 200; Akbarzadeh, *Uzbekistan and the United States*, 35; Smith, “Counterinsurgency in Uzbekistan,” 39; Martha Brill Olcott, “U.S. Policy in Central Asia: Balancing Priorities (Part 2),” Testimony, House Committee on International Relations, Washington, D.C., April 26, 2006, 14-5; Tanya Charlik-Paley, Phil Williams, and Olga Oliker, “The Political Evolution of Central Asia and South Caucasus: Implications for Regional Security,” In *Faultlines of Conflict in Central Asia and the South Caucasus: Implications for the U.S. Army*, eds. Olga Oliker and Thomas S. Szayna (Santa Monica, CA: RAND, 2003), 26-7.

<sup>272</sup> Zeyno Baran, “Fighting the War of Ideas,” *Foreign Affairs* 84, no. 6 (November/December 2005): 68.

<sup>273</sup> Olcott, “U.S. Policy in Central Asia: Balancing Priorities (Part 2),” 14-5.

<sup>274</sup> Andrea L. Hlosek, “The Mechanics of Russian Foreign Policy in the Caucasus and Central Asia—Regional Hegemony or Neo-Imperialism?” (master’s thesis, Naval Postgraduate School, 2006), 69-70; International Crisis Group, “Uzbekistan: The Andijon Uprising,” 7-8; Quillen, “Democracy—A Tree Without Roots on the Steppes of Central Asia,” 63-4; Naumkin, *Radical Islam in Central Asia*, 262.

criminalization of secular dissent.”<sup>275</sup> Islam became a security issue largely because Karimov made it that way through repression.<sup>276</sup> As Rashid astutely observes, “having crushed a democratic opposition, he has driven his opponents underground, particularly Islamic militants based in Ferghana.”<sup>277</sup>

Islamic extremism became the boogeyman of his regime—the label is applied to any opposition and any citizen mobilization is seen as a security threat. While it is true that Karimov overstated the threat to justify repressing opponents, the danger was not a complete illusion. As IMU operations proved, there was a threat. Analysts have labeled the Ferghana Valley a time bomb of discontent, whose explosion could rock the entire region. Virtually every family network in the area has been touched by the mass arrests there.<sup>278</sup> Religious activity in general came to be viewed as a source of potential regime enemies. Islam was the particular focus, but other groups such as Protestant Christians and Hare Krishnas are also repressed. Foreigners participating in religious activities are frequently deported. The numbers allowed to make the Hajj each year are kept below the amount allocated to the state by Saudi authorities and madrassahs are no longer given permission to open. This is part of a strategy to suppress religious sentiment among the young.<sup>279</sup> In pursuing these activities, “Karimov depicts himself as protecting the motherland, not just his regime, from subversion and terrorism and as maintaining the political stability that prevents radical Islamist groups from seizing power.”<sup>280</sup> His strategy is viewed as risky and there is little doubt that the regime’s policy of repression

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<sup>275</sup> McCauley, *Afghanistan and Central Asia*, 112.

<sup>276</sup> Quillen, “Democracy—A Tree Without Roots on the Steppes of Central Asia,” 64.

<sup>277</sup> Rashid, “The New Struggle in Central Asia,” 41.

<sup>278</sup> Carlisle, “Geopolitics of Uzbekistan,” 91; Quillen, “Democracy—A Tree Without Roots on the Steppes of Central Asia,” 64-5; Smith, “Counterinsurgency in Uzbekistan,” 34; Trisko, “Coping with the Islamist Threat,” 374, 379.

<sup>279</sup> Igor Rotar, “Government Accused of Systematically Repressing Muslims,” *Transitions Online*, November 6, 2006, <http://www.tol.cz/look/TOL/article.tpl?IdLanguage=1&IdPublication=4&NrIssue=191&NrSection=4&NrArticle=17803> (accessed December 18, 2006).

<sup>280</sup> Hill and Jones, “Fear of Democracy or Revolution,” 122.

aides rather than hinders the recruiting efforts of revolutionaries in a state where half the population is under twenty-one and rural educational systems and economic prospects are deteriorating.<sup>281</sup>

Even given these conditions, supporters of political Islam and active radical Islamists remain a small minority. The majority of practicing believers remain attracted to the region's traditionally moderate Hanafi teachings, surprising many analysts, who expected the harsh conditions to stimulate large numbers of radicals to action by now. Yet, the IMU never gained a wide following and, as Mihalka highlights, neither HT nor any other Islamist element rose out of the Ferghana to exploit the turmoil of the Tulip Revolution in Kyrgyzstan.<sup>282</sup> Nevertheless, Olcott believes that "there is a process of 'globalization' going on among Uzbekistan's believers, which is working to the advantage of those advocating more radical forms of Islam."<sup>283</sup> Salafists and revisionist Hanifists are gaining ground. The latter has members in the state sponsored clerical organization.<sup>284</sup> McGlinchey builds on this by arguing that a growing number of moderate regime opponents feel they have little choice but to support "the revolutionary agenda of the IMU and HT" since they have been barred from all forms of political participation.<sup>285</sup> Another danger is that average citizens may come to believe that "one of the few groups remaining that can provide some insulation from government abuse is

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<sup>281</sup> Martha Brill Olcott, "Human Rights and the New Geopolitics of Central Asia," Testimony, House Committee on International Religious Freedom, Washington, D.C., November 27, 2001, <http://www.carnegieendowment.org/publications/index.cfm?fa=view&id=865&prog=zru> (accessed October 4, 2006); Charamut, "Policing the Silk Road," 22-3; Akbarzadeh, *Uzbekistan and the United States*, 37.

<sup>282</sup> Michael Mihalka, "Not Much of a Game: Security Dynamics in Central Asia," *China and Eurasia Forum Quarterly* 5, no. 2 (2007): 25-6; Olcott, "Briefing on Prospects for Political Change in Uzbekistan"; Naumkin, *Radical Islam in Central Asia*, 262.

<sup>283</sup> Olcott, "Briefing on Prospects for Political Change in Uzbekistan."

<sup>284</sup> Olcott, "Briefing on Prospects for Political Change in Uzbekistan."

<sup>285</sup> McGlinchey, "Autocrats, Islamists, and the Rise of Radicalism in Central Asia," 338; Hlosek, "The Mechanics of Russian Foreign Policy in the Caucasus and Central Asia," 69-70.

the underground Islamists.”<sup>286</sup> At a minimum, repression and economic difficulties may simply cause them to ‘turn a blind eye’ to insurgent actions, which has historically magnified any revolutionary threat.<sup>287</sup>

## **D. KAZAKHSTAN**

### **1. The Military**

Kazakhstan’s armed forces are thoroughly co-opted by President Nursultan Nazarbayev’s regime. A combination of weak ministers, who may or may not be qualified but are loyal to Nazarbayev, and frequent turnover has insured that the Ministry of Defense (MOD) remained in his grasp since before independence. Cummings presents this as a consistent presidential strategy.<sup>288</sup> “The President used elites to weaken institutions, particularly by appointing a weak Minister, a mere figurehead or the proverbial dummy in a shop window, to a traditionally strong Ministry.”<sup>289</sup> Nazarbayev also chairs the State Security Council. This body makes all decisions related to defense and security policies, as well as all senior military appointments.<sup>290</sup>

Analysts currently view Kazakhstan’s military as the second strongest in Central Asia—behind Uzbekistan. However, this was not always the case. In the mid-1990s the Ministry of Defense had little prestige due to its small size, a funds shortage stemming from a weak economy, the absence of an external threat, an inability to enforce conscription, and the fact that the state gave up its TU-95 Bear bombers, air-launched cruise missiles, and nuclear weapons stockpile of 104 SS-18 intercontinental ballistic missiles and 1,040 warheads. State officials were disinclined at that time to maintain anything beyond a National Guard force of 20,000 troops. Furthermore, at independence the officer corps was 97 percent ethnic Russian—only 3,000 ethnic Kazakh officers were

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<sup>286</sup> McGlinchey, “Autocrats, Islamists, and the Rise of Radicalism in Central Asia,” 339.

<sup>287</sup> Smith, “Counterinsurgency in Uzbekistan,” 33.

<sup>288</sup> Cummings, “The Political Elite in Kazakhstan Since Independence (1991-1998),” 99, 123.

<sup>289</sup> Ibid., 99.

<sup>290</sup> Smith, *Breaking Away from the Bear*, 21.

in the entire Soviet Army and none commanded a division, army, or military district. Seventy percent of the officers left for other republics. Shortages of qualified officers remain a problem today. Officer training schools at the Academy of Armed Forces of the Republic of Kazakhstan, Air Force School, Military Academy of Civic Aviation, and the Navy College are attempting make up the shortfall. In addition to indigenous training, five hundred Kazakhstani officers are trained in Russia annually, while a small number goes to Turkey and Germany. Officers were also brought in from the various internal security organs to help fill the gap. The present force is much smaller than the six Soviet divisions once stationed in the republic. Initial planning envisioned a force equal to one-half of one percent of the population or roughly 83,000 in all branches; however current manning rests at 65,800 divided between ground and air defense components, along with a small naval force of 3,000. Corruption, hazing, looting, and desertion remain problems. Military service is not viewed with a high degree of prestige.<sup>291</sup>

The current National Security Strategy and military doctrine, adopted in 2007 and 2000 respectively, focus on responding to “existing and potential sources of armed conflict in close proximity to the border of the state, possible infiltration of the territory of the country by armed formations of extremists and international terrorists, and the appearance of new nuclear powers in the region.”<sup>292</sup> Four military districts were established. Priority was given to the southern one as major concerns for the administration are the possible infiltration of Islamist extremists from that direction and periodic tensions on the Kazakh-Uzbek border. The Western district is considered second most important due to the petroleum resources located there and concerns over Caspian Sea security issues. Military reform efforts signed in 2003 focus on the creation of mobile forces, along with equipment modernization, improving training, and procuring air defense systems. Defense spending was a low priority during the first decade of

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<sup>291</sup> O'Malley, “Central Asia and South Caucasus as an Area of Operations,” 293, 304; Jim Nichol, “Kazakhstan: Recent Developments and U.S. Interests,” CRS Report for Congress, 97-1058, March 7, 2007, 4; Smith, *Breaking Away from the Bear*, 21-5; Fairbanks, et al., “Strategic Assessment of Central Asia,” 34; OxResearch, “Central Asia: Perceptions Influence Military Reform”; Cummings, “The Political Elite in Kazakhstan Since Independence (1991-1998),” 126; Fairbanks, et al., “Strategic Assessment of Central Asia,” 35; Burnashev, “Regional Security in Central Asia,” 142, 148-50; Olcott, *Central Asia's New States*, 73-4; Olcott, *Kazakhstan: Unfulfilled Promise*, 232-3.

<sup>292</sup> Allison, “Conclusion: Central Asian Security I the Regional and International Context,” 255.

independence. As a result of improving economic fortunes, recent years witnessed a rise in funding for that arena. Military expenditures remain the lowest in the region at 0.9 percent of the state budget. While in pure dollar terms it is the largest amount in Central Asia, this is not a level that will not likely allow the achievement of the objectives stated above. Most equipment remains Soviet/Russian in origin. The U.S. Excess Defense Articles program has been used to transfer some American equipment to Kazakhstan as well, but this remains a minute piece of the whole structure.<sup>293</sup> William O'Malley of RAND sums up that "Kazakhstan is just now seriously beginning a reform and restructuring process, but it is a least five years behind Uzbekistan and is unlikely to catch up in the next decade...real improvements will be limited to a few elite, combat-ready formations...Low-tech, poorly trained units will likely remain the norm."<sup>294</sup>

Nazarbayev also created a Republican guard that directly reports to him in 1992. This organization contains approximately 2,500 personnel. A Government Guard includes another 500. The Ministry of the Interior now controls the 20,000 troops that previously made up the Soviet internal forces. Its mission is to maintain public order and suppress internal disturbances. A border guard force of 12,000 answers to the National Security Committee (KNB), except under a declared crisis when it is attached to the Ministry of Defense. The KNB controls Special Forces 'Arystan' and 'Barlau' units as well. Cummings claims that the key strategic security questions are dealt with by the KNB, which is answerable only to President Nazarbayev and grew out of the Soviet era KGB organization in Kazakhstan. The budget for all of these paramilitary forces equals that of the Ministry of Defense. The Nazarbayev regime dominates their structures and

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<sup>293</sup> Igor Mukhamedov, "The Domestic, Regional, and Global Security Stakes in Kazakhstan" (master's thesis, Naval Postgraduate School, 2004), 3-5, 28-9; Allison, "Conclusion: Central Asian Security I the Regional and International Context," 255; Burnashev, "Regional Security in Central Asia," 147-8; Nichol, "Kazakhstan: Recent Developments and U.S. Interests," 4.

<sup>294</sup> O'Malley, "Central Asia and South Caucasus as an Area of Operations," 303-4.

natural resource wealth is said to have been effectively utilized to ensure the loyalty of these groups. They, in turn, monitor elite circles, the general public, and the military for potential regime rivals.<sup>295</sup>

## **2. Strength of Moderate Opposition Groups**

David Hoffman's words sum up the current state of Kazakhstan's moderate opposition. "The Kazakhstani political arena is characterized by President Nazarbayev's unwavering grip on power, and the resultant chill in pluralism and political liberalization."<sup>296</sup> Nazarbayev and his party associates have won every presidential and parliamentary election of the post-Soviet period. While better than Uzbekistan's rating, Kazakhstan's 2006 Freedom House democracy score of 6.36 on a scale where seven is the worst rating represents a consistent decline and falls under the category of not free. This score has dropped every year since the state received a 5.3 in 1997.<sup>297</sup> "Stability has been the watchword of the regime, and the ruling elite has viewed democracy as anathema to stability."<sup>298</sup> This stemmed from fears that the emergence of parties would cause the birth of ethnically aligned parties and interethnic conflict and that it would herald the emergence of a counter-elite. Constitutional maneuverings sanctioned a growing concentration of power in the president's hands. Overall, a political culture based on personality was created due to the lack of democratic norms, rule of law, or institutional development. One's power and opportunity are defined by one's

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<sup>295</sup> Roger N. McDermott, "Kazakhstan's Emerging Role in the War on Terror," *Terrorism Monitor* 2, no. 10 (May 20, 2004), 6-8, <http://www.jamestown.org/terrorism> (accessed July 18, 2007); Smith, *Breaking Away from the Bear*, 21-2; OxResearch, "Central Asia: Perceptions Influence Military Reform"; Burnashev, "Regional Security in Central Asia," 148; Nichol, "Kazakhstan: Recent Developments and U.S. Interests," 4; Fairbanks, et al., "Strategic Assessment of Central Asia," 34; Collins, "The Logic of Clan Politics," 258; Olcott, *Kazakhstan: Unfulfilled Promise*, 188; Cummings, "The Political Elite in Kazakhstan Since Independence (1991-1998)," 99.

<sup>296</sup> Hoffman, "Oil and State-Building in Post-Soviet Azerbaijan and Kazakhstan," 240.

<sup>297</sup> Bhavna Dave, "Nations in Transit—Kazakhstan (2006)," Freedom House, 2006, <http://www.freedomhouse.org/template.cfm?page=47&nit=404&year=2006> (accessed October 7, 2006); Rashid, "The New Struggle in Central Asia," 39; Freedom House, "Freedom in the World—Kazakhstan," Freedom House Freedom in the World Report, 2006, [http://freedomhouse.org/inc/content/pubs/fiw/inc\\_country\\_detail.cfm?year=2006&country=6990&pf](http://freedomhouse.org/inc/content/pubs/fiw/inc_country_detail.cfm?year=2006&country=6990&pf) (accessed February 12, 2007).

<sup>298</sup> Cummings, "The Political Elite in Kazakhstan Since Independence (1991-1998)," 73.



relationship to the regime elite.<sup>299</sup> “There is no conception of the state or nation separate from the person of the President; officials are the President’s servants, not the nation’s.”<sup>300</sup> This comes at the expense of legislative and judicial institutions. Checks and balances are basically nonexistent. While the legislature can nominate and pass laws, it is dominated by Nazarbayev supporters. It and the judiciary are regime rubberstamps. Transparency in the judicial system is lacking throughout, but political cases are particularly problematic. Compounding presidential control is his power to dismiss the prime minister, to appoint regional and district governors, and to directly remove any judge except a member of the Supreme Court. As a result, Freedom House awards Kazakhstan a rating of only 6.25 in the category of constitutional, legislative, and judicial framework independence.<sup>301</sup>

Opposition figures and parties are not in a position to challenge the regime. Their actions are tightly restricted and controlled. Both physical and legal attacks have been used to bring this about. As Rashid identifies, the state reaction to oppositionists progressed through a cycle starting with harassment, then suppression, and culminating in incarceration or exile. Election authorities regularly deny registration to parties such as Ak Zhol and the Democratic Choice of Kazakhstan (now Alga! or Forward!). Leaders attempting to challenge the regime often find themselves with unrelated legal offenses. Additionally, some opposition figures have met mysterious deaths.<sup>302</sup> Registration laws from 2002 made organizing opposition parties even more difficult. These require a minimum of 700 members in every province, 50,000 signatures (old law required 3,000),

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<sup>299</sup> Cummings, “The Political Elite in Kazakhstan Since Independence (1991-1998),” 73, 111-2.

<sup>300</sup> Ibid., 112.

<sup>301</sup> Martha Brill Olcott, “Next Page: The REAL Kazakhstan,” *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, November 12, 2006, <http://www.carnegieendowment.org/publications/index.cfm?fa=print&id=18886> (accessed December 18, 2006); Cummings, “The Political Elite in Kazakhstan Since Independence (1991-1998),” 112; Polity IV Project, “Polity IV Country Report 2003: Kazakhstan,” Center for International Development and Conflict Management, 2003, [http://www.cidcm.umd.edu/polity/country\\_reports/Kzk1.htm](http://www.cidcm.umd.edu/polity/country_reports/Kzk1.htm) (accessed February 12, 2007); Dave, “Nations in Transit—Kazakhstan (2006)”; Freedom House, “Freedom in the World—Kazakhstan”; Bertelsmann Foundation, “Country Report: Kazakhstan,” Bertelsmann Transformation Index, 2006, <http://www.bertelsmann-transformation-index.de/155.0.html?L=1> (accessed October 8, 2006).

<sup>302</sup> Olikier, “Kazakhstan’s Security Interests and Their Implications for the U.S.-Kazakh Relationship,” 65; Economist Intelligence Unit, “Country Report Kazakhstan”; Kubicek, “Authoritarianism in Central Asia,” 35.

and mandated that the organization must have previously competed in two successive parliamentary elections. Of the twelve parties participating in the 2004 parliamentary elections, nine were pro-presidential. These were identical in platform, but targeted different societal sectors. Since 2004 only one opposition figure occupied a seat in the legislature, Alikhan Baimenov of Ak Zhol. Until late 2006, he had refused to actually take up the seat he won in protest. However, that seat was lost in the August 2007 parliamentary elections, as Nazarbayev's Nur Otan won all seats with 88 percent of the vote. No other party was officially reached the 7 percent threshold for representation.<sup>303</sup>

Commentators state that most leading opposition figures originate among the Middle Umbrella Clan and among businessmen. This is ascribed to discontent growing out of the domination of the Elder clan around Nazarbayev. Clan interests promote the adoption of liberal ideas as a venue for competition, while business interests want to see the state's economy opened up to further investment and competition.<sup>304</sup> Opposition parties suffer from internal fracturing and distrust between organizations, which hampers their effectiveness. Frequent party splintering, such as a faction of Ak Zhol creating Nagyz Ak Zhol in 2005, results in splitting of what opposition votes there. Some maintain the regime actively promotes the formation of splinter parties to keep the opposition weak. What is more, a wide gap between the general populace and the parties appears to exist. While the oppositionists focus on political reform, average citizens want standard of living issues addressed.<sup>305</sup> Perhaps an even greater problem is the image issue. "Many of the new opposition leaders have been timeservers in the regime they

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<sup>303</sup> Joanna Lillis, "Kazakhstan Experiences a Political Shift," *Eurasianet.org*, October 17, 2006, <http://www.eurasianet.org/departments/insight/articles/eav101706.shtml> (accessed April 6, 2007); Bertelsmann Foundation, "Country Report: Kazakhstan"; Polity IV Project, "Polity IV Country Report 2003: Kazakhstan"; Rashid, "The New Struggle for Central Asia," 39; Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, "Ruling Party Sweeps Kazakh Parliamentary Polls," *Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty*, August 19, 2007, <http://www.rferl.org/featuresarticle/2007/08/0735d67f-7578-4f64-b21d-38f7cc376c33.html> (accessed August 19, 2007).

<sup>304</sup> Cummings, "Kazakhstan: An Uneasy Relationship," 64-5; Olcott, "Next Page: The REAL Kazakhstan"; Furman, "The Regime in Kazakhstan," 244.

<sup>305</sup> Karim Sayid, "Will Kazakhstan Go the Georgian Way?," *Central Asia-Caucasus Analyst* 5, no. 5 (March 10, 2004): 8, <http://www.cacianalyst.org/issues/20040310Analyst.pdf> (accessed October 5, 2006); Lillis, "Kazakhstan Experiences a Political Shift"; Dave, "Nations in Transit—Kazakhstan (2006)"; Freedom House, "Freedom in the World—Kazakhstan."

now criticize and many are also engulfed in corruption scandals.”<sup>306</sup> A number have simply been co-opted into the regime’s patronage network. Kazakhstan’s immense size, widely dispersed population, and the north-south divide makes campaigning difficult, while the opposition lacks a coherent marketable message.<sup>307</sup>

Freedom of the press is enshrined in Kazakhstan’s constitution. Nonetheless, free media is virtually nonexistent. Freedom House scores independent media a 6.75 and 161st of 193 countries in the world. This situation continues to deteriorate rather than improve. Outlets not controlled by presidential family members or close associates must practice self censorship or risk prosecution. Charges of ‘offending the dignity of the president’ are regularly leveled against anyone attempting to discuss election fraud or political corruption. At one point Dariga Nazarbayeva had controlling positions in both *Karavan* and *Khabar*, the largest newspaper and television station in the state. The state owns most printing and signal transmission facilities. These resources are utilized to promote regime candidates, while opposition parties are denied access. There are allegations that pro-opposition journalists are physically assaulted or financially harassed. The regime’s technical skill in preventing access to websites is also growing.<sup>308</sup> “Amendments to the Law on Mass Media give courts far greater latitude to close down media outlets for ‘violating Kazakhstan’s integrity,’ condoning ‘extremism,’ and ‘undermining state security.’”<sup>309</sup>

Civil society scores follow a downward trajectory with a current rating of 5.75. Street demonstrations are high of the regime’s priority list after Akayev’s overthrow in Kyrgyzstan. Rallies are broken up by police and the leaders are arrested for illegal

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<sup>306</sup> Rashid, “Russia, China Warily Watch for American Intrusions in Central Asia,” 2.

<sup>307</sup> Fiona Hill, “Whither Kazakhstan? (Part II),” *The National Interest*, October 2005, <http://www.inthenationalinterest.com/Articles/October2005/October2005HillPart2PFV.html> (accessed June 13, 2007); Hoffman, “Oil and State-Building in Post-Soviet Azerbaijan and Kazakhstan,” 400-1; Daniel Kimmage, “Central Asia: Holding onto Power,” *Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty*, November 15, 2005, <http://muslimuzbekistan.com/en/centralasia/comments/story.php?ID=1484> (accessed October 3, 2006).

<sup>308</sup> Kubicek, “Authoritarianism in Central Asia,” 34; Economist Intelligence Unit, “Country Report Kazakhstan”; Dave, “Nations in Transit—Kazakhstan (2006)”; Bertelsmann Foundation, “Country Report: Kazakhstan”; Oliker, “Kazakhstan’s Security Interests and Their Implications for the U.S.-Kazakh Relationship,” 65.

<sup>309</sup> Dave, “Nations in Transit—Kazakhstan (2006).”

gatherings. NGOs also find themselves under pressure. According to laws adopted in 2005, foreign individuals or organizations are prohibited from participating in or supporting activities within Kazakhstan that seek to affect the process of nominating political candidates, while indigenous NGOs that advocate reform or civil liberties encounter government resistance through state inspections and monitoring. Much of the regime's increased targeting of civil society and opposition figures can be attributed to fears of a forced removal from power by another 'color revolution'. Preparations were made for just such an occurrence during the December 2005 presidential election, which Nazarbayev won overwhelmingly with 91 percent of the vote. Oppositionists maintained that the results were fraudulent, yet no protests erupted and this outcome does not appear to have grown more likely in the intervening period. Prior to the election, weapons distribution to police elements increased, protests during the election cycle were banned, and foreign press and NGOs were restricted. Nazarbayev frequently stated that no repeat of events in Bishkek would be permitted. Besides the security institutions, there are other facts hindering the development of a popular uprising. The state is relatively prosperous and prospects are improving. Natural resource wealth allows many potential 'troublemakers' to be bought off. In addition, unlike tiny Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan is four times the size of Texas with less than three times the population of Washington, D.C.<sup>310</sup> "Kazakhstan's poor are relatively dispersed across the country's enormous territorial expanse, making them much more difficult to organize."<sup>311</sup>

Moreover, instead of relying only on force, Nazarbayev utilizes a variety of tools. State patronage, media control, legal manipulations, fraud, and clan loyalties are enlisted in this quest for regime preservation.<sup>312</sup> "Whereas Karimov has pursued a scorched earth

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<sup>310</sup> Gershman and Allen, "The Assault on Democracy Assistance," 43; Zaretsky, "Sally N. Cummings (ed.), Power and Change in Central Asia," 47; Dave, "Nations in Transit—Kazakhstan (2006)"; Freedom House, "Freedom in the World—Kazakhstan"; Economist Intelligence Unit, "Country Report Kazakhstan"; Lillis, "Kazakhstan Experiences a Political Shift"; Cutler, "Economics and Security in Central Asia"; Kimmage, "Kazakhstan: A Shaken System"; Bertelsmann Foundation, "Country Report: Kazakhstan"; Vasily Kharlamov, "Revolutionaries in Kazakhstan Will Be Shot," *The Current Digest of the Post-Soviet Press* 57, no. 26 (2005): 9.

<sup>311</sup> Martha Brill Olcott, "Lessons of 'The Tulip Revolution'," Testimony, Commission of Security and Cooperation in Europe, Washington, D.C., April 7, 2005, 8.

<sup>312</sup> Polity IV Project, "Polity IV Country Report 2003: Kazakhstan."

strategy in Uzbekistan, seeking to destroy any and all opposition he confronts,” the Kazakh executive has “been more selective, working to eliminate only those political rivals who pose an immediate threat to the autocratic status quo.”<sup>313</sup> The journalist Paul Starobin said that he went to Kazakhstan in search of information on a despised dictator, but instead he found one that was tolerated and even popular, an impression shared by other commentators. Political reforms did not strike him as at the top of the populace’s priority list. While there are restrictions, they appeared to see themselves as better off than their neighbors in Central Asia. Others mirror these remarks. Nazarbayev remains popular and many believe he will continue to deliver on the economic policy front.<sup>314</sup>

Additionally, in the Bertelsmann Foundation’s view, Nazarbayev is aided by a situation where “most people in Kazakhstan possess a highly vague understanding of democracy and how it should work.”<sup>315</sup> What is more, while Nazarbayev’s family has made tremendous personal fortunes, they, unlike many neopatrimonial regimes, typically operate with some restraint that allows others outside their immediate circle to have a chance to make money as well. State development continues, not state stripping. For this, and other reasons, most elites are not ready to break ranks with Nazarbayev. Many elites inclined to seek reforms are young enough to wait for gradual openings to have an effect. There is a feeling that Nazarbayev navigated the state through a difficult time at independence and gained western economic involvement without becoming estranged from Russia. The elites are not looking to unseat Nazarbayev, but want continued economic growth, measured institutional development, and an opportunity to compete when he does leave the scene. The ranks of those holding this sentiment appears to be growing. This line of thought coincides well with Nazarbayev’s actions and strategies. Soon after the Tulip Revolution occurred in Kyrgyzstan, he announced a 32 percent rise

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<sup>313</sup> McGlinchey, “Autocrats, Islamists, and the Rise of Radicalism in Central Asia,” 340.

<sup>314</sup> Paul Starobin, “Sultan of the Steppes,” *The Atlantic Monthly* 296, no. 5 (December 2005), <http://www.theatlantic.com/doc/print/200512/kazakhstan-president> (accessed May 30, 2007); Hill, “Whither Kazakhstan? (Part II)”;  
Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, “Kazakhstan’s Domestic Politics on a World Stage.” *Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty*, September 29, 2006. <http://www.rferl.org/releases/2006/09/436-290906.asp> (accessed October 3, 2006).

<sup>315</sup> Bertelsmann Foundation, “Country Report: Kazakhstan.”

in pay for government employees.<sup>316</sup> Essentially, as Cummings argues, for his part, “by concentrating on the economy, Nazarbaev is gambling to buy off the opposition by improving living standards.”<sup>317</sup> This goes hand in hand with the reality that “in post-Soviet Kazakhstan, private interests are not deep-rooted or well-protected by law. None of them are strong enough to stand out against the state or protect themselves from it.”<sup>318</sup>

### **3. Strength of Revolutionary Groups**

#### ***a. Secessionism***

In the immediate post-independence period, potential secessionism in the northern section of the state was at the forefront of revolutionary concerns. This was due to Kazakhstan’s unenviable position as the only new state in the region where the titular nationality was not a majority of the population. A Soviet census in 1989 showed that Kazakhs accounted for only 38 percent. Ethnic Russians were the majority in the north, which was closely tied to Russia economically and tightly integrated with the Siberian cities just across the border. Many viewed the northern Kazakh steppe as rightfully part of Russia.<sup>319</sup> In 1996, Olcott highlighted this when she stated that “the threat of secession is so obvious that it does not need to be stated, and it is viewed as so calamitous that no serious politician in Kazakhstan dares speak of it in public. When anyone does mention changing Kazakhstan’s borders...the political climate in the republic becomes almost hysterical.”<sup>320</sup> Examples of this nationalist sentiment were comments made by Vladimir Zhirinovskiy during his 1993 campaign and Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn, the Nobel

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<sup>316</sup> Hill, “Whither Kazakhstan? (Part II)”; Starobin, “Sultan of the Steppes”; Olcott, *Central Asia’s Second Chance*, 140.

<sup>317</sup> Cummings, “Kazakhstan: An Uneasy Relationship,” 63.

<sup>318</sup> Cummings, “The Political Elite in Kazakhstan Since Independence (1991-1998),” 114.

<sup>319</sup> Suny, “Provisional Stabilities,” 173; Olcott, *Central Asia’s New States*, 60-1; Olcott, “Kazakhstan: Nursultan Nazarbaev as Strong President,” 113-4.

<sup>320</sup> Olcott, *Central Asia’s New States*, 60.

laureate, in 1990 and 1994. Both called for all or significant parts of Kazakhstan to be reincorporated into Russia, sentiments shared by some Russians living in the region.<sup>321</sup>

Jorn Holm-Hansen detected both indifference and resistance among ethnic Russians to Kazakhstan's independent status. Some held that Russians had brought civilization to Kazakhstan and, as such, it had no right to exist separately. More appeared to believe that the northern regions, which had been populated by Russians for an extended period, simply belonged in the Russian state.<sup>322</sup> Holm-Hansen's field research in 1999 determined that "the words 'us' and 'our President' could just as easily mean the Russian Federation and Boris Yeltsin."<sup>323</sup> During the Soviet period the two ethnic communities occupied different elite strata in the Kazakh Soviet Socialist Republic. Russians dominated economic positions, while Kazakhs were preponderate in government. After the USSR's demise, Kazakhs parlayed their political positioning into economic power as they took over the newly privatized state-owned enterprises. This led to complaints of oppression and fears that Kazakh nationalism, Islam, and the Kazakh language would increasingly threaten Russian's way of life. One data point utilized to argue for a charge of discrimination is that, while they constitute 30 percent of the population, only 8 percent of government positions are in Russian hands.<sup>324</sup>

Russian complaints about bureaucratic representation accurately reflect their declining role in government posts. In 1994, Russians held 21 percent of these jobs, while by 1995 that number fell to 14 percent and the decline continued. Making this more apparent was the Kazakhs disproportionate share in Russian oblasts (regions)—an attempt by Nazarbayev to ensure control over those areas. Voting districts were also

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<sup>321</sup> Thomas S. Szayna, "Potential For Ethnic Conflict in the Caspian Region," In *Faultlines of Conflict in Central Asia and the South Caucasus: Implications for the U.S. Army*, eds. Olga Oliker and Thomas S. Szayna (Santa Monica, CA: RAND, 2003), 177; Olcott, *Central Asia's New States*, 60; Mukhamedov, "The Domestic, Regional and Global Security Stakes in Kazakhstan," 14.

<sup>322</sup> Jorn Holm-Hansen, "Political Integration in Kazakhstan," In *Nation-Building and Ethnic Integration in Post-Soviet Societies: An Investigation of Latvia and Kazakhstan*, ed. Pal Kosto (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1999), 173-4; John Clark, "A Strategy of Preventive Development in Kazakhstan," Hudson Institute White Paper (Washington, D.C.: Hudson Institute, January 20, 2004), 43-4, <http://www.sipr.org/pdf/clarkprevdev.pdf> (accessed June 9, 2007).

<sup>323</sup> Holm-Hansen, "Political Integration in Kazakhstan," 173.

<sup>324</sup> Clark, "A Strategy of Preventive Development in Kazakhstan," 42-3.

gerrymandered to ensure a high percentage of Kazakhs occupied parliamentary seats, while regional boundaries were redrawn to increase Kazakh percentages in heavily Russian oblasts. Realizing the precariousness of his early situation, Nazarbayev did not pursue Kazakhification with reckless abandon—his actions were measured to prevent a backlash. The president understood nationalism’s dangers and crushed its manifestations both among Kazakhs and Russians. Ethnically-neutral policies like the redistribution of petroleum tax wealth from the regions of origin to those lacking resources irrespective of ethnic composition were carried out. Some say the secessionist threat prompted Nazarbayev to move the state capital from Almaty in his southern Elder clan stronghold to Astana (formerly Akmola), which lies in Middle clan territory. This had the dual effect of permitting the government to keep a closer eye on developments in the region and encouraging Kazakhs to migrate north. Another key factor was Nazarbayev’s clear understanding of demographic realities. Kazakh birthrates far outstrip Russian figures—time was on his side.<sup>325</sup>

The Slavic Union Lad party was the strongest Russian nationalist organization. It ran afoul of laws banning parties with a regional, ethnic, or religious orientation. Lad seeks to counter what it views as Kazakh attempts to turn Russians into the equivalent of ‘guest workers’ in Saudi Arabia or Kuwait. It also assists Russians wanting to emigrate or acquire Russian citizenship navigate the bureaucratic hurdles. Ust-Kamenogorsk has been one of the tensest cities related to the ‘Russian’ issue. Twenty-two separatists led by Viktor Kazimirchuk of the Rus Patriotic Movement were arrested there in 1999 on a charge of conspiracy to commit terrorist acts and overthrow the government with the intent of establishing an autonomous republic in the north. People of both sides expected a heated response from Moscow, but in reality only quiet diplomatic protests resulted. Of note, very few Russians in Kazakhstan itself expressed sympathy for this group. Most complaints that arose simply surrounded the belief that

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<sup>325</sup> Dave “Politics of Language Revival,” 199-200; Mukhamedov, “The Domestic, Regional and Global Security Stakes in Kazakhstan,” 14; Hoffman, “Oil and State-Building in Post-Soviet Azerbaijan and Kazakhstan,” 403; Starobin, “Sultan of the Steppes”; Cummings, “Kazakhstan: An Uneasy Relationship,” 68-9; Suny, “Provisional Stabilities,” 174; Olcott, *Kazakhstan: Unfulfilled Promise*, 76, 80.



their sentences were too harsh, which led to later reductions. A number of Russian nationalists remain active with groups inside Russia's borders and advocate for their co-nationalists.<sup>326</sup>

While the Cossack threat was largely overstated, they also asserted their right to a homeland in the far west near the Volga. The former chieftain of the Semirechie Cossacks, Nikolai Gunkin, who was imprisoned for three months in 1995 for his political activities, did not accept the end of the Soviet Union and viewed himself as a defender of Russian rights.<sup>327</sup> Gunkin referred to Kazakhstan as "a 'fascist' state that endorsed 'genocide of Russians'."<sup>328</sup> Cossacks were banned from creating militias inside Kazakhstan, but those seeking to train crossed the border with Russia, where their activities are legal. While Cossacks enjoy a special status and state-sponsored cultural revival in Russia, their relationship with the Kazakh government remains strained. Cossacks seek recognition as a distinct ethnic group, while the government only recognizes them as a social and political group; thus, negating any pretensions to a right of self determination. While Gunkin's arrest generated heated remarks in the Russian Duma and press, as well as some nationalist outcries, the Cossack issue has not generated the firestorm of support that he sought. Overtime, as the government has become more confident in its position, some openings have occurred. Cossack groups were allowed to register as NGOs as long as they do not attempt to advocate secession. They have also been allowed to wear uniforms and conduct cultural activities.<sup>329</sup>

Ethnic Russians ultimately voted with their feet, as 1.5 million left for the Russian Federation between 1992 and 2000. Overall, however, researchers found that only 13 percent of all ethnic Russians in Kazakhstan actually viewed the Russian Federation as their 'homeland' and only 6.6 percent believed that there was a chance that

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<sup>326</sup> Olcott, *Central Asia's Second Chance*, 60; Holm-Hansen, "Political Integration in Kazakhstan," 173-4; Clark, "A Strategy of Preventive Development in Kazakhstan," 42, 44; Olcott, *Kazakhstan: Unfulfilled Promise*, 79-80.

<sup>327</sup> Olcott, "Kazakhstan: Nursultan Nazarbaev as Strong President," 114; Holm-Hansen, "Political Integration in Kazakhstan," 174; Olcott, *Kazakhstan: Unfulfilled Promise*, 77-8.

<sup>328</sup> Ibid., 78.

<sup>329</sup> Olcott, "Kazakhstan: Nursultan Nazarbaev as Strong President," 114; Holm-Hansen, "Political Integration in Kazakhstan," 174; Olcott, *Kazakhstan: Unfulfilled Promise*, 77-8.

the Kazakh state might become extinct, which was good news for Kazakhstani officials fearing irredentism. Two factors ameliorate the issue. Firstly, the Russian language continues to be almost universally spoken and, second, Russians continue to have numerous economic opportunities in Kazakhstan, especially in the technical and natural resource fields. Also, unlike many states that have experienced ethnic conflict, in Kazakhstan the groups have not completely self-segregated in the public sphere and continue to commingle. Besides, ethnic Russian protests have thus far been unsuccessful in generating a strong response by Moscow. Jim Nichol believes the threat of separatism, while real in the past, is now diminished given these factors.<sup>330</sup> John Clark agrees with this as long as ethnic Russians continue to have economic opportunities and “are not treated in a demeaning manner by the state.”<sup>331</sup> Olcott simply argues that, while it is likely that a majority of Kazakhstan’s Russians would support secession, “there has never been strong evidence that Russian nationalist groups (including the Cossacks) pose a serious threat to the Kazakh state. While Russian nationalists within the Russian Federation are vocal on the need to support ‘compatriots’ living in Kazakhstan...the fate of these ‘stranded Russians’ has never been a major campaign issue of mainstream political figures.”<sup>332</sup>

For his part; however, David Hoffman does not perceive secession as “at all far-fetched, especially given the occasional calls of both sides of the border for a post-Soviet Anschluss among Slavs.”<sup>333</sup> Most secessionist support was driven underground by government action and its illegality, which makes an accurate assessment of support difficult. While most Russians express some passive support for autonomy or secession, a hard-core group of separatist militants remains and most ethnic Russians remain

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<sup>330</sup> Irina Malkova, Pal Kolsto, and Hans Olav Melberg, “Attitudinal and Linguistic Integration in Kazakhstan and Latvia,” In *Nation-Building and Ethnic Integration in Post-Soviet Societies: An Investigation of Latvia and Kazakhstan*, ed. Pal Kolsto (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1999), 237-8, 255; Olcott, *Central Asia’s Second Chance*, 60; Clark, “A Strategy of Preventive Development in Kazakhstan,” 42, 44; Nichol, “Central Asia’s Security,” 2.

<sup>331</sup> Clark, “A Strategy of Preventive Development in Kazakhstan,” 44.

<sup>332</sup> Olcott, *Kazakhstan: Unfulfilled Promise*, 76.

<sup>333</sup> Hoffman, “Oil and State-Building in Post-Soviet Azerbaijan and Kazakhstan,” 403.

oriented toward the Russian Federation.<sup>334</sup> Thomas Szayna holds that “if the policies of ‘ethnic redress’ in Kazakhstan lose their current cautious edge, the likelihood of Russian secessionism gaining strength in northern Kazakhstan is strong. Russian leadership in Moscow would be hard pressed not to support their fellow Russians.”<sup>335</sup> Geopolitical and economic considerations have overridden any irredentist urges in Moscow thus far and it is likely that they would have a restraining effect in the future.

***b. Militant Islamists***

Nazarbayev always viewed Islam as a potential source danger to his rule, as well the greatest threat to stability in Central Asia. The regime feared its legitimacy would be called into question due to its secular nature if a religious revival occurred. Besides this, there were early fears that an increase in Islamic practice would further alienate ethnic Russians. Kazakhstan is the only Central Asian state not to give Islam a special legal status. Nazarbayev also actively promoted Russian Orthodoxy’s status in an attempt to counterbalance potential problems. Religious activities are monitored closely, especially those of foreigners, such as Pentecostal Protestants and Muslim ‘Wahhabi’ missionaries. A tremendous building boom for mosques and religious schools occurred after independence financed with foreign money. Even with that, foreign entities not in Kazakhstan in an official capacity caught proselytizing—the definition of this activity has continued to broaden—have been quickly deported; however, indigenous religious leaders have largely been left alone and accepted. The state continues to try to perpetuate the Soviet era emphasis on Islam as a tradition versus as a faith and like Uzbekistan there is a state controlled muftiate, the Muslim Ecclesiastic Administration.<sup>336</sup>

Islam was late arriving in Kazakhstan and has traditionally been moderate in nature, lacking a fundamentalism like that present in the Ferghana Valley.<sup>337</sup> In Clark’s words, “compared to many of its neighbors, many observers would say,

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<sup>334</sup> Olcott, *Kazakhstan: Unfulfilled Promise*, 76, 79.

<sup>335</sup> Szayna, “Potential for Ethnic Conflict in the Caspian Region,” 177.

<sup>336</sup> Olcott, *Kazakhstan: Unfulfilled Promise*, 207-10; McCauley, *Afghanistan and Central Asia*, 113; Olikier, “Kazakhstan’s Security Interests and Their Implications for the U.S.-Kazakh Relationship,” 65.

<sup>337</sup> Bremmer and Welt, “Kazakhstan’s Quandry,” 150; McCauley, *Afghanistan and Central Asia*, 113.

Kazakhstan has been blessed with a healthy brand of Islam.”<sup>338</sup> By and large, Kazakhstan’s Muslims have been secular in viewpoint and tolerant of other religions. With communism’s collapse an upsurge in interest resulted, but this did not manifest itself in the political arena. It has been more of a cultural and ethnic identity issue. The ethnic composition of the state also hindered Islamist oppositionists from developing power bases. Some see these as causal mechanisms for the absence of large acts of extremist violence on the Kazakh landscape.<sup>339</sup>

Although radical movements have posed no threat to Kazakhstan to date, the government has begun to sound some alarms. There are arguments that the patterns that led to extremism elsewhere are starting to be seen there. Missionaries from states like Saudi Arabia, Pakistan, Egypt, Sudan, Jordan, Turkey, and Uzbekistan continue to plague the government by preaching for the creation of an Islamic state. Fundamentalist religious education is more common, whether at home or abroad. Militant cells have appeared in Kazakhstani prisons, which could pose a problem as Kazakhstan is said to have one of the higher per capita incarceration rates in the world. The age bracket with the largest number identifying themselves as believers is the 18 to 29 grouping, which in Olcott’s opinion indicates something of a real religious revival, particularly among the poorer, less educated subgrouping. After the 1999 Tashkent bombings in Uzbekistan and the IMU raids in Kyrgyzstan in 1999 and 2000, reverberations were felt in Kazakhstan. The government increased pressure on religious groups and increased spending for its security organs. A special anti-terrorism force and an Anti-Terrorist Center, as part of the National Security Committee, were created. United States trainers began to work with Kazakhstani Special Forces units to improve their counterinsurgency capabilities. Diplomatic channels were also used to build regional and international cooperation on

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<sup>338</sup> Clark, “A Strategy of Preventive Development in Kazakhstan,” 37.

<sup>339</sup> Bremmer and Welt, “Kazakhstan’s Quandry,” 150; Trisko, “Coping With the Islamist Threat,” 377, 379; Clark, “A Strategy of Preventive Development in Kazakhstan,” 37-9.

anti-Islamist efforts. These include agreements in the Commonwealth of Independent States, United Nations, and Shanghai Cooperation Organization.<sup>340</sup>

HT cells have operated in Kazakhstan since the 1990s and have slowly gained in popularity. Some analysts link HT's growth in this state to the immigration of ethnic Uzbeks after the 1999 Tashkent bombings and those in Bukhara and Tashkent in 2004. While reported arrests date back to at least 2001 when security forces were stunned by the appearance of thousands of leaflets in Almaty on Nazarbayev's birthday, the president specifically warned his populace about this group in a 2004 press conference—claiming to have seized 11,000 of their leaflets, an increase over the 1,000 from the previous year. This rationale served as the basis for a new anti-extremism law. When one delves deeper, however, evidence reveals that HT's recruiting successes in Kazakhstan are primarily within the Uzbek minority living there, primarily in the heavily populated, poorer southern border towns. While some of the messages target the perceived illegitimacy of Nazarbayev's regime, the content of the majority of the seized leaflets is written in Uzbek and relays an anti-Karimov message. Polling data describes Uzbeks as the most religious group in the country. Overall, arrests of HT members remain at a low level in Kazakhstan—hundreds versus thousands in Uzbekistan. Many of those arrested are unemployed youths, who get paid for distributing the material.<sup>341</sup>

One issue concerning both the Nazarbayev regime and surrounding states is that Kazakhstani territory has been used for training camps and as a transit route for Islamist elements. As early as 2001, camps were closed down in the mountainous region surrounding Almaty. Uzbek officials regularly complain that extremists targeting it train and operate out of the border regions between the two states. Kazakh officials, who

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<sup>340</sup> Olcott, *Kazakhstan: Unfulfilled Promise*, 210-2; Clark, "A Strategy of Preventive Development in Kazakhstan," 38; Olikier, "Kazakhstan's Security Interests and Their Implications for the U.S.-Kazakh Relationship," 66; Nichol, "Kazakhstan: Recent Developments and U.S. Interests," 3; Rashid, *Jihad*, 235.

<sup>341</sup> Clark, "A Strategy of Preventive Development in Kazakhstan," 38; Charamut, "Policing the Silk Road," 34; McCauley, *Afghanistan and Central Asia*, 113; McGlinchey, "Autocrats, Islamists, and the Rise of Radicalism in Central Asia," 340-1; Olcott, "The War on Terrorism in Central Asia and the Cause of Democratic Reform," 90; Olikier, "Kazakhstan's Security Interests and Their Implications for the U.S.-Kazakh Relationship," 65-6; Mukhamedov, "The Domestic, Regional and Global Security Stakes in Kazakhstan," 19; Satpayev, "Uzbekistan is Subject to the Worst Risk of Terrorism in the Central Asian Region"; Olcott, *Kazakhstan: Unfulfilled Promise*, 212; Charlick-Paley, et al., "The Political Evolution of Central Asia and South Caucasus," 27; Rashid, *Jihad*, 130-1; Naumkin, *Radical Islam in Central Asia*, 193.

periodically denied this, surprised many in 2004 when they admitted to arresting a dozen purported members of the IJG, which had claimed responsibility for the Bukhara-Tashkent suicide bombings. This was followed up with announced apprehensions of terrorists with foreign ties in April and November 2006 in Almaty and the Akmola region respectively. This may indicate an increasing threat or merely that the state security forces are increasingly active.<sup>342</sup>

Rashid claims that Nazarbayev's complete suppression of moderate secular opposition has "left the field to extremists, notably Islamic militants trained in Afghanistan, and Russian and Cossack settlers clamoring for greater autonomy."<sup>343</sup> In a 2005 report for the United Nations, the Public Policy Research Center challenges this assertion, stating that "the influence of Islam in Kazakhstan is insignificant, because of the weak adherence to Islamic traditions, high rates of modernization have pushed Islam to the periphery of public life."<sup>344</sup> While some extremist movements like HT are active, anti-Kazakh terrorist groups do not appear to be present currently—no 'Islamic Movement of Kazakhstan' exists. There is no state-wide network in place that could mobilize opposition. What support there is for Islamist groups tends to be limited to specific geographic regions, specifically among Uzbeks living on the Kazakh-Uzbek border. Starobin's investigation found that Nazarbayev's generally lighter hand on religion, especially when compared to Karimov, had not generated the same revolutionary zeal. Rather than turning to radical Islam, most oppositionists and the public continue to work for reform within the secular framework of the state. Additionally, the secessionist threat continues to fade as time passes. Taken together, Kazakhstan faces only low levels of threat from secular and Islamist oppositionists,

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<sup>342</sup> Olcott, *Kazakhstan: Unfulfilled Promise*, 211; Satpayev, "Uzbekistan is Subject to the Worst Risk of Terrorism in the Central Asian Region"; Nichol, "Kazakhstan: Recent Developments and U.S. Interests," 3.

<sup>343</sup> Rashid, "The New Struggle in Central Asia," 39.

<sup>344</sup> Public Policy Research Center, "Kazakhstan Background Study for the UNDP Report: Regional Cooperation for Human Development and Security in Central Asia," Policy Studies, no. 1 (February 2005): 78.

although the regime perceives it as higher.<sup>345</sup> Finally, the Bertelsmann Transformation Index report for 2006 provides a good summary point for this section. It states, “There is virtually no competition with the state’s monopoly on the use of force.”<sup>346</sup>

## **E. CONCLUSION**

This chapter reveals that there is a match between the conservative tendencies of the regime and elite clan politics and the actual environment that is currently present in each state. Returning to Snyder’s diagram on the trajectories of neopatrimonial regimes we will see how this is the case (see Figure 4).

Neither Kazakhstan nor Uzbekistan has an autonomous military structure. The military is tightly controlled by the regimes with all key personnel appointments based more on personal loyalty than qualifications and ability. Military hardware acquisitions are tightly managed by the regime with acquisitions reportedly more politically motivated than necessarily need-based. There are reports that some equipment taken from western sources proved useless for local purposes.<sup>347</sup> They represent the two best militaries in the region, but, again, the bar is low and these two states have the largest population base and resource pool from which to pull. While both regimes have sought to improve the capabilities of the military, they put more resources into their national security services, which actively penetrate and monitor the armed forces for loyalty.

In the same vein moderate opposition in both states is weak. Opposition political figures have been jailed, harassed, threatened, and physically assaulted. Most top level leaders are in exile and most analysts concur that these figures have lost touch with and are out of sync with the desires of the public. Karimov has essentially destroyed political opposition and civil society in Uzbekistan. While in Kazakhstan, Nazarbayev has successfully rooted out any effective opposition without resorting to the same ‘scorched

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<sup>345</sup> Olcott, “Kazakhstan: Nursultan Nazarbaev as Strong President,” 125; Satpayev, “Uzbekistan is Subject to the Worst Risk of Terrorism in the Central Asian Region,” Clark, “A Strategy of Preventive Development in Kazakhstan,” 37; Starobin, “Sultan of the Steppes”; Trisko, “Coping With the Islamist Threat,” 374; McGlinchey, “Autocrats, Islamists, and the Rise of Radicalism in Central Asia,” 340-1.

<sup>346</sup> Bertelsmann Foundation, “Country Report: Kazakhstan.”

<sup>347</sup> Mukhamedov, “The Domestic, Regional and Global Security Stakes in Kazakhstan,” 29

earth’ strategy—one oppositionist and some non-affiliated candidates were periodically allowed to be elected and serve in parliament. Nazarbayev has essentially been more strategic in his use of violence. As such, it appears Nazarbayev remains much more popular with the Kazakh people than Karimov does in Uzbekistan, where he is loathed on the street.

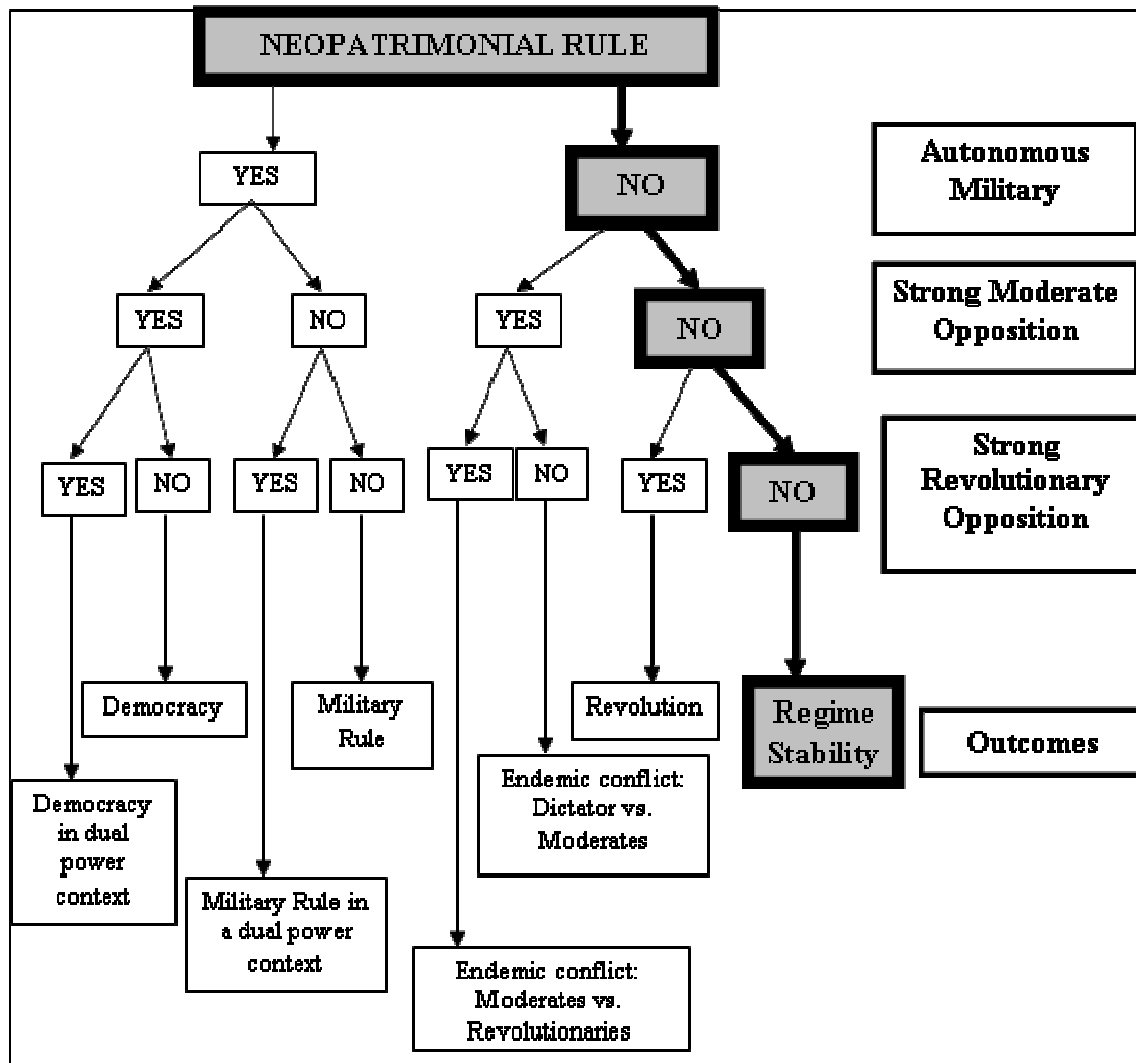


Figure 4. Results of analysis of Uzbekistan & Kazakhstan.<sup>348</sup>

<sup>348</sup> Snyder, “Explaining Transitions from Neopatrimonial Dictatorships,” 382.



Finally, no effective revolutionary opposition exists in either state. In Kazakhstan, ethnic Russian secessionism appears to be under control. Nazarabyev's skillful avoidance of issues that would have been generated a strong and public nationalism, continued economic opportunities, and emigration back to the Russian Federation are likely responsible for this. An issue described in the 1990s as a 'tinderbox' has largely "subsided through a combination of legal guarantees, state coercion, and symbolic politics."<sup>349</sup> Islamist opposition never materialized in Kazakhstan. Those elements that exist are largely ethnic Uzbeks focused on the overthrow of Karimov. Islamic practice has not migrated toward the militant political variant and opposition still resides in the secular political system, even though it is still a heavily controlled environment. Conversely, in Uzbekistan, despite attempts by groups like the IMU to foment revolution, no one has managed to bring the populace onto the streets. While there is active recruiting by radical Islamists in the Ferghana Valley, no group is successfully mobilizing the public or is currently strong enough to stand against the Uzbek security organs. Taken together, when these characteristics are placed into Snyder's theoretical framework (see Figure 4 above), it demonstrates that under the current conditions regime stability is the most likely outcome of the succession issue that hangs over Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan. As such, Snyder's theoretical lens leads to the conclusion that there is not a mismatch between the conservative status quo tendencies revealed in the previous chapter and the current environment in these states.

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<sup>349</sup> Schatz, *Modern Clan Politics*, 101.

## IV. CONCLUSIONS

Oliker accurately muses that “if, in the summer of 2001, the International Crisis Group could safely write (with regard to Central Asia) that ‘no outside power is sufficiently interested in the region to make major investments in its security,’ this is clearly no longer the case.”<sup>350</sup> This region, which it is likely few, even in military and government circles, could have located on a map on September 10, 2001, suddenly leapt onto the world stage again. Both concerns about the Global War on Terrorism and desires to play a role in the region’s energy politics drove a rise in American interest. Russia grew concerned that its sphere of influence was being eroded by the construction of American military bases and that its soft underbelly might become directly exposed to radical Islamists if they gained a foothold in Central Asia. Additionally, Russian politicians and business interests feared the loss of access to and revenue from the oil and natural gas reserves present there. China’s presence in the region has grown tremendously as that country attempts to meet its skyrocketing energy requirements. China also shares Russian concerns over Islamist militants given the presence of groups such as the East Turkestan Islamic Movement in its Xinjiang Region, which shares a border with Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan. India has joined the fray with its intentions of opening the first military base outside its borders in Tajikistan. Indian officials are also seeking to satiate its growing electricity needs by gaining access to electricity generation projects in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan. Indian regional involvement has the dual benefit of also putting pressure on Pakistan, which has long sought to boost its economic and diplomatic ties to the region.

Given all of the above, stability in Central Asia is desired by all of the major players, in addition to the regimes themselves. What is more, instability in either of these two states could have devastating consequences for neighboring states given the interconnectedness of the region. The succession issue could represent to gravest danger

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<sup>350</sup> Olga Oliker, “Conflict in Central Asia and South Caucasus: Implications of Foreign Interests and Involvement,” In *Faultlines of Conflict in Central Asia and the South Caucasus: Implications for the U.S. Army*, eds., Olga Oliker and Thomas S. Szayna (Santa Monica, CA: RAND, 2003), 185.

to stability in the near future. Given the ages of the two leaders involved, they could pass from the scene without warning via death or illness. Assassinations and accidents cannot be ruled out. What also cannot be discounted is that either or both of these leaders will choose to shun retirement and attempt to perpetuate their power for the remainder of their lives. However, at some point, whether by human decision or natural expiration, there will be a transfer of power. If it does occur in their lifetimes, a groomed replacement, reminiscent of Vladimir Putin in Russia, appears to be the most likely choice. Then the question arises of the acceptability to the general populace, oppositionists (such as exist), and the elites of allowing this type of managed handoff to occur.<sup>351</sup>

Central Asia has witnessed three different types of leadership changes thus far. In Tajikistan, the situation degenerated into a civil war when the government mismanaged clan and oppositionist relations. Turkmenistan essentially saw Snyder's regime stability idea played out with an orderly handover of power decided among the elite stakeholders after Niyazov's death. Askar Akayev was ushered out of power in Kyrgyzstan during a popular uprising engineered and led by moderate opposition figures, who essentially represented competing elite networks. Initially, the Tajik Civil War was used by the other regimes to rationalize their need to a strong hand to maintain order. Later, the Tulip Revolution replaced it in the regional rhetoric. Yet, Akayev's chaotic end does not predetermine a similar fate for either of the regimes in question any more than the Tajik Civil War did. What it does mean in the eyes of many analysts is that the likelihood that revolutionary Islamists or opposition groups will take a shot at them, if there is ever a suitable opening, has risen.<sup>352</sup>

The international community must take the regional context into consideration in its pushes for political reform. It would be extremely difficult to reform the current systems in Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan due to the need to deal with the patronage

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<sup>351</sup> Stephen Blank, "Strategic Surprise? Central Asia in 2006," *China and Eurasia Forum Quarterly* 4, no. 2 (2006): 126; Olikier and Szayna, "Sources of Conflict and Paths to U.S. Involvement," 310; Olcott, "Revisiting the Twelve Myths of Central Asia," 11; Zaretsky, "Sally N. Cummings (ed.), Power and Change in Central Asia," 47.

<sup>352</sup> Olcott, "Lessons of the Tulip Revolution," 5, 7.

networks and the inevitable corruption that such a situation engenders.<sup>353</sup> Katz argues that “attempting to eliminate what the ruling elites gain from corruption would be extremely dangerous because this would motivate them to overcome their rivalries and unite.”<sup>354</sup> Starr supports this by stating that “it is the power brokers, clan leaders, and magnates who launched presidents Akaev, Nazarbayev, and Karimov, rather than vice versa. In Tajikistan their failure in this effort led directly to the civil war.”<sup>355</sup> Collins sums this by simply stating that “any plans that don’t take the sociopolitical and socioeconomic realities of clan politics into account are bound to fail.”<sup>356</sup> Deliberations over selecting a new leader bring the leadership of elite factions into a potentially destabilizing scenario. Potential replacements are much more likely to be evaluated by elite elements based on the criterion of maintaining the status quo than they are for their abilities to further state interests. Otherwise, the elite coalitions that traditionally surround the process and bring about an orderly transition could be threatened, as some elements come to view rivals as growing too strong and their interests as not being considered. Despite a few issues that have arisen, there are few indicators that there is a legitimate split forming within elite circles capable of breaking down the current status quo.<sup>357</sup>

Oppositionists do not appear poised to affect the process greatly. As Starr stated, “Long before Putin jailed potential rival Mikhail Khodorkovskii, Presidents Nazarbayev and Karimov had driven their rivals Akezhan Kazhegeldin (Kazakhstan) and Abdurrahim

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<sup>353</sup> Katz, “Revolutionary Change in Central Asia,” 159; Collins, “Clans, Pacts, and Politics in Central Asia,” 151; Bichel, “Contending Theories of Central Asia,” 77.

<sup>354</sup> Katz, “Revolutionary Change in Central Asia,” 159.

<sup>355</sup> S. Frederick Starr, “Clans, Authoritarian Rulers, and Parliaments in Central Asia,” *Silk Road Paper*, June 2006, 9, [http://www.silkroadstudies.org/new/docs/Silkroadpapers/0605Starr\\_Clans.pdf](http://www.silkroadstudies.org/new/docs/Silkroadpapers/0605Starr_Clans.pdf) (accessed June 13, 2007).

<sup>356</sup> Collins, “Clans, Pacts, and Politics in Central Asia,” 151.

<sup>357</sup> Stephen Blank, “Corruption Scandals Dog Central Asian Leaders,” *Central Asia-Caucasus Analyst*, September 24, 2003, [http://www.cacianalyst.org/view\\_article.php?articleid=1762](http://www.cacianalyst.org/view_article.php?articleid=1762) (accessed October 5, 2006); Martha Brill Olcott, “Democracy Promotion in Central Asia: From High Expectations to Disillusionment,” Lecture, CORE Workshop on Democratization in Central Asia, Hamburg, Germany, February 10, 2007, <http://www.carnegieendowment.org/publications/index.cfm?fa=view&id=19065> (accessed June 7, 2007); Vaisman, “Regionalism and Clan Loyalty in the Political Life of Uzbekistan,” 115-6.

Pulatov and Mohammad Salikh (Uzbekistan) from the country.”<sup>358</sup> Opposition is largely banned. In Uzbekistan, crushed is a more appropriate description, while in Kazakhstan some opposition figures are openly still in the country. However, when they appear to get too strong or outspoken, Nazarbayev takes steps to ensure they do not become problematic. The press is heavily restricted and most is owned or operated by regime family members or loyalists. The incumbents dominate both the legislatures and judiciaries. The opposition that exists has largely been driven underground.<sup>359</sup>

Many commentators have also argued that the poverty, corruption, and oppression present in the region should have caused radical Islamism to gain a much greater foothold than it has. This is not to say that these issues have not made recruitment easier. Yet, while carrying out some dramatic attacks, the IMU never developed a following large enough to threaten the Karimov regime and a similar organization never arose in Kazakhstan. HT appears to be growing and currently generates the greatest concern, but it has yet to show a propensity for action or to develop a definite platform for change, other than general calls for the instatement of the caliphate.<sup>360</sup> Mihalka makes the point that “poor structural conditions are not enough for radical Islam to succeed; it must also organize systematically and have effective courses of action.”<sup>361</sup> They must also overcome the fact that Islamic movements or parties are outlawed by the state, which makes supporting them dangerous to potential adherents. What is more, these types of revolutionary movements, or ‘popular fronts’ in Bichel’s words, are modern creations with no historical foundations in the fabric of society. These popular fronts must find a way to integrate themselves into a framework where loyalties are dominated by traditionalist mindset of clan politics if they are to be effective.<sup>362</sup> “In short, the primary obstacle that the popular fronts face is their lack of familiar roots and allegiances. The

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<sup>358</sup> Starr, “Clans, Authoritarian Rulers, and Parliaments in Central Asia,” 16.

<sup>359</sup> Charlick-Paley, et al., “The Political Evolution of Central Asia and South Caucasus,” 17-8.

<sup>360</sup> Olikier and Szayna, “Sources of Conflict and Paths to U.S. Involvement,” 312; Mihalka, “Not Much of a Game,” 25-6; Naumkin, “Uzbekistan’s State-Building Fatigue,” 134; Charlick-Paley, et al., “The Political Evolution of Central Asia and South Caucasus,” 32-3.

<sup>361</sup> Mihalka, “Not Much of a Game,” 26.

<sup>362</sup> Bichel, “Contending Theories of Central Asia,” 68-9.

usurpation of family ties as the primary basis of societal relations...would be revolutionary in and of itself.”<sup>363</sup> As Naumkin argues, these ‘solidarity groups’ will continue to make popular mobilization difficult.<sup>364</sup> The protests that do occur tend to be of an economic rather than of a political nature.

Additionally, as Crane Brinton argued in *The Anatomy of a Revolution*, “no government has ever fallen before attackers until it has lost control over its armed forces or lost the ability to use them effectively.”<sup>365</sup> O’Donnell and Schmitter support this by stating that “no transition can be forced purely by opponents against a regime which maintains the cohesion, capacity, and disposition to apply repression.”<sup>366</sup> Unlike Akayev in Kyrgyzstan, both executives reviewed in this thesis appear ready and willing to use force when the need arises. On the other hand, this willingness does not always translate into effective use. Even small scale defections on the part of military or security forces could prove crucial. At that point, they are no longer confronting unarmed civilians or armed insurgents, but armed fellow members of the state security apparatus. Conversely, they may simply refuse to fire when called upon and sit out the situation to see who wins. Either could prove catastrophic to the regime in question and signal its end. Yet, the absence of a defection can be fatal for even a large scale revolutionary uprising. Karimov and Nazarbayev both probably have a greater coercive capacity than at any time in their regimes—although some question their abilities to handle uprisings that are not confined to a limited geographic region, but spread throughout the entire state. The armed forces are thoroughly co-opted into their patronage networks and the state security services, themselves reliable, have infiltrated them to monitor their loyalty. The cost of exercising this capacity can at times be measured in increased alienation from the populace and increase support for radicals. Since, once force is used, a choice to not use it in the future will be viewed by regime opponents as weakness and result in the creation of even more opponents rather than as a positive change due to existing anger over previous instances.

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<sup>363</sup> Bichel, “Contending Theories of Central Asia,” 69.

<sup>364</sup> Naumkin, “Uzbekistan’s State-Building Fatigue,” 131.

<sup>365</sup> Mark N. Katz, “Democratic Revolutions: Why Some Succeed, Why Others Fail,” *World Affairs* 166, no. 3 (Winter 2004): 163-4.

<sup>366</sup> O’Donnell and Schmitter, *Transitions from Authoritarian Rule*, 21.

Bolstering our current cases, however, is Laura Adams' argument that moderate repression is much more dangerous for a regime than its full employment, as is especially evident in Uzbekistan.<sup>367</sup>

Leadership transition in these two states could be messy given the lack of institutional will to utilize the available constitutional provisions and mechanisms. Efforts to have generational transfers to children or in-laws could be particularly tricky. The current regimes may be strong enough to fend off any competitors, but there is no guarantee that their replacements will be. It took several years for Karimov and Nazarbayev to consolidate their positions after being given the reins. These states have varying combinations of disaffected clans and other elites, along with oppositionists of a democratic or Islamist nature that have been waiting for a chance to improve their situation politically and/or economically for almost two decades. They are not likely to view being sidelined throughout another administration as acceptable if they are in a position to do anything about it. Another group to add to the mix is those who, while loyal insiders currently, become disaffected by the transition process and perceive they have been snubbed in some way. Any attempt by the public at large to protest might be seized on by forces attempting to carry out another 'color revolution' or by Islamist revolutionaries.<sup>368</sup> O'Donnell and Schmitter, while not speaking directly about these regimes, identify the key summary point for this issue. They assert "that there is no transition whose beginning is not the consequence—direct or indirect—of important divisions within the authoritarian regime itself."<sup>369</sup>

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<sup>367</sup> Collins, "Clans, Pacts, and Politics in Central Asia," 150; Pillai, "Uzbekistan after Karimov"; Katz, "Revolutionary Change in Central Asia," 161, 168; Katz, "Democratic Revolutions," 169; Martha Brill Olcott, "Russia, Central Asia and Caucasian Threats: A Four Year Assessment," Testimony, House Committee on Armed Services, Washington, D.C., September 22, 2005, 5; Laura Adams, "Cultural Elites in Uzbekistan: Ideological Production and the State," In *The Transformation of Central Asia: States and Societies from Soviet Rule to Independence*, ed., Pauline Jones Luong (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2004), 101-2.

<sup>368</sup> Olcott, "Revisiting the Twelve Myths of Central Asia," 11; Blank, "Corruption Scandals Dog Central Asian Leaders"; Olcott, "Lessons of the Tulip Revolution," 5, 7; Phil Williams, "Criminalization and Stability in Central Asia and South Caucasus," In *Faultlines of Conflict in Central Asia and the South Caucasus: Implications for the U.S. Army*, eds., Olga Olikier and Thomas S. Szayna (Santa Monica, CA: RAND, 2003), 101.

<sup>369</sup> O'Donnell and Schmitter, *Transitions from Authoritarian Rule*, 19.

The legitimacy of the current regimes is very much tied to their ability to redistribute state resources throughout the various patronage networks that permeate the state. They do not have a party ideology to fall back on.<sup>370</sup> Cummings argues that “the political elite’s ability to ensure economic redistribution will be its surest guarantee of keeping society together.”<sup>371</sup> McGlinchey views patronage politics as “the thin skin holding Central Asian states together.”<sup>372</sup> The key incendiary problem in both Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan appears to have been a mismanagement of the clan issue and attempts to restrict certain groups’ access to power and resources, which pushed them into forming a strong opposition.<sup>373</sup> However, even with all of these factors there is a strong vein of conservatism in the regimes, clan politics, and current situations inside each state as displayed by Snyder’s criteria, which could serve to facilitate controlled handoffs more in the style of Turkmenistan at Saparmurat Niyazov’s death in December 2006, than the Tulip Revolution in Kyrgyzstan or the Civil War in Tajikistan.

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<sup>370</sup> Cummings, “The Political Elite in Kazakhstan Since Independence (1991-1998),” 10; Cummings, “The Political Elite in Kazakhstan Since Independence (1991-1998),” 10. McGlinchey, “In For Life,” 2.

<sup>371</sup> Cummings, “The Political Elite in Kazakhstan Since Independence (1991-1998),” 10.

<sup>372</sup> McGlinchey, “In for Life,” 2.

<sup>373</sup> Olcott, “Revisiting the Twelve Myths of Central Asia,” 11; Olcott, “Lessons of the Tulip Revolution,” 5, 7; Cummings, “The Political Elite in Kazakhstan Since Independence (1991-1998),” 10.



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